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Trump declares an Iranian's general's 'reign of terror' over

By ZEKE MILLER, ROBERT BURNS and LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump declared Friday that a "reign of terror is over" as he marked the death of an Iranian general killed in a U.S. strike and as the Pentagon scrambled to reinforce the American military presence in the Middle East in preparation for reprisals.

Gen. Qassem Soleimani "made the death of innocent people his sick passion," Trump said from his estate in Palm Beach, Florida, adding "a lot of lives would have been saved" if he'd been hunted down years ago.

The United States is sending nearly 3,000 more Army troops to the Mideast in the volatile aftermath of the killing ordered by Trump, defense officials said.

Also Friday, the Pentagon placed an Army brigade in Italy on alert to fly into Lebanon if needed to protect the American Embassy there, part of a series of military moves to protect U.S. interests in the Middle East. Speaking on condition of anonymity, an official said the U.S. could send 130 to more than 700 troops to Beirut from Italy. The official was not authorized to be



President Donald Trump delivers remarks on Iran, at his Mar-a-Lago property, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020, in Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

identified.

Reinforcements were ordered as U.S. officials said they had compelling intelligence that Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force who was killed in the U.S. strike, was planning a significant campaign of violence against the United

States.

Officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a decision not yet announced by the Pentagon, said the new contingent of troops is from the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. They are in addition

to about 700 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne who deployed to Kuwait earlier this week after the storming of the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad by Iran-backed militiamen and their supporters.

Trump said of Soleimani: "We take comfort in know-

ing that his reign of terror is over."

But the dispatching of extra troops reflects concern about potential Iranian retaliatory action for the killing.

Continued on Next Page



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Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivers a statement on Iraq and Syria, at President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago property, Sunday, Dec. 29, 2019, in Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

It also runs counter to Trump's repeated push to extract the United States from Mideast conflicts. Prior to this week's troop deployments, the administration had sent 14,000 additional troops to the Mideast since

May, when it first publicly claimed Iran was planning attacks on U.S. interests. The reinforcements took shape as Trump gave his first comments on the strike, declaring that he ordered the killing of Soleimani because he had killed and

wounded many Americans over the years and was plotting to kill many more. "He should have been taken out many years ago," he added.

The strike marked a major escalation in the conflict between Washington and Iran, as Iran vowed "harsh retaliation" for the killing of the senior military leader. The two nations have faced repeated crises since Trump withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed crippling sanctions.

The United States urged its citizens to leave Iraq "immediately" as fears mounted that the strike and any retaliation by Iran could ignite a conflict that engulfs the region.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo defended the strike as "wholly lawful," saying that Soleimani posed an "imminent" threat against the U.S. and its interests in the region.

"There was an imminent

attack," Pompeo told Fox News. "The orchestrator, the primary motivator for the attack, was Qassem Soleimani."

The White House did not inform lawmakers before the strike. It was expected to give classified briefings to members of Congress and staff in the afternoon. Defense Secretary Mark Esper notified House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the strike shortly before the Pentagon confirmed it publicly. Pompeo called world leaders Friday to explain and defend Trump's decision to order the airstrike that has sparked fears of an explosion of anti-American protests as well as more violence in the already unstable Middle East.

The State Department said Pompeo had spoken Friday with top officials in Afghanistan, Britain, China, France, Germany and Pakistan. In his calls with the British and German foreign ministers as well as China's state

councilor, Pompeo stressed that Trump acted to counter an imminent threat to U.S. lives in the region but also that the U.S. is committed to "de-escalation" of tensions, according to the department's summaries of the conversations.

De-escalation was not mentioned in the department's summary of his call with the French foreign minister, nor in his calls with Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani or the Pakistani military chief of staff. In those calls Pompeo "underscored the Iranian regime's destabilizing actions through the region and the Trump Administration's resolve in protecting American interests, personnel, facilities and partners," the department said.

Trump opted not to play a round of golf on Friday, and he was not expected to be seen publicly until he travels to Miami for an afternoon event for his reelection campaign. □

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Lawsuit: Pentagon withholding info from veterans' advocates

By **BEN FINLEY**
Associated Press
NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — A veterans group said the Pentagon has stopped releasing information that helps former service members to contest less-than-honorable discharges from the military.

The Defense Department has been breaking the law since April, according to a lawsuit filed Thursday in federal court in Virginia by the National Veterans Legal Services Program.

The group says it lacks access to decisions made by military review boards. The boards grant or deny a veteran's request to upgrade a less-than-honorable discharge. Veterans' lawyers

study those decisions in hopes of building successful arguments for their clients.

The lawsuit comes at a time of growing recognition that a less-than-honorable discharge can stem from behaviors brought on by post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries. Liberal consideration is supposed to be given to veterans with combat-related mental health conditions and to those who were sexually assaulted while in the military.

Lawyers and veterans' advocates "often look" at the past decisions of military review boards, said Bart Stichman, executive director of the organization that

filed the lawsuit.

"These decisions are redacted to protect privacy," he added.

"You don't see the name of the veteran who has PTSD or other personal information."

Lisa Lawrence, a spokeswoman for the Defense Department, said in an email that the military is "reviewing the complaint and will consult with the Department of Justice on an appropriate response to this lawsuit."

Dana Montalto, a clinical instructor at Harvard Law School's Veterans Legal Clinic, backed up the lawsuit's claim that discharge decisions have not been available. □

Ex-Maryland lawmaker sentenced to prison for misusing funds

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN

Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. (AP) — A

former Maryland state lawmaker was sentenced Friday to six months in prison followed by two months of home detention for misusing campaign funds for her personal benefit.

Tawanna Gaines, a Democrat who had served in the Maryland House of Delegates since 2001, also must pay \$22,565 in restitution.

Gaines, 67, of Berwyn Heights, pleaded guilty in October to one count of wire fraud. She faced a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, but federal sentencing guidelines called for a range of eight to 14 months. U.S. District Judge Theodore Chuang wasn't bound by those guidelines when he sentenced Gaines, who must report to prison by Feb. 24. Gaines told the judge that she didn't want other public officials to be judged by her actions.

"I took my oath very seriously, but I fell short," she said. The judge said the prison sentence reflects a need to deter others, particularly public officials, from engaging in "this type of corrupt behavior." He called her crime a "lapse in judgment" in an otherwise law-abiding career.

"It may not have seemed like a big deal at the time, but it undermines our citizens' faith in their democracy," Chuang said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Windom has said Gaines spent campaign money on personal expenses including fast food, hair styling, dental work, a cover for her swimming pool and an Amazon Prime membership. The prosecutor, who recommended an eight-month prison sentence, said Gaines made more than 200 illegal withdrawals of money over three years, but it added up to a relatively modest amount. "There doesn't appear to be a reason for it," he said. "The defendant does not lead an extravagant lifestyle."

Gaines resigned days before she was charged in a

criminal information. The Oct. 7 court filing accused Gaines of defrauding her campaign and its contributors out of more than \$22,000.

Since June 2002, Gaines had used a campaign committee called "Friends of Tawanna P. Gaines" to raise money for her political campaigns. It was a regulated state election campaign committee with a designated bank account. Separately, Gaines controlled a PayPal account for donations that weren't disclosed in state campaign finance filings, a court filing said.

Gaines, who was vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee, submitted her resignation to House Speaker Adrienne Jones on Oct. 4. Defense attorney William Brennan said the guilty plea also will cost Gaines her state pension. "She has always been a dedicated public servant," he said. "She was not out for personal political gain."

Gov. Larry Hogan appointed a new delegate, attorney Nicole Williams, to replace Gaines and represent District 22 in Prince George's County.

Gaines' daughter and former campaign treasurer, Anitra Edmond, pleaded guilty in November to a related charge of wire fraud. Edmond is scheduled to be sentenced on Feb. 24. Edmond also took campaign funds for her personal use and failed to disclose contributions on state campaign finance reports, according to a court filing.

House Speaker Adrienne Jones told The Associated Press on Thursday that a measure banning a family member from serving as a legislative candidate's campaign treasurer will be introduced.

Before the sentencing hearing, Gaines' attorney submitted more than a dozen "character letters" from her supporters, including Jones. "I have always admired the way that, as important as her political life was, her family was always of paramount impor-



Tawanna Gaines, a former Maryland delegate, arrives at the U.S. District Court in Greenbelt, Md., for a hearing, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

ance," Jones wrote.

Gaines' case marked the

latest in a string of criminal

charges against current or

former state legislators in

Maryland in recent years. □

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Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky., speaks on the Senate floor, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020 at the Capitol in Washington. Associated Press

McConnell and Pelosi give no signs of budging on impeachment

By **LISA MASCARO**
AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress opened the new year with the Senate deadlocked over President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, leaving the proceedings deeply in flux as Republicans refuse to bend to Democratic demands for new witnesses.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell showed no signs Friday of negotiating with the Democrats as he aims for Trump's swift acquittal. At the same time, the Republican leader acknowledged the Senate cannot begin the historic undertaking until House Speaker Nancy Pelosi delivers the articles of impeachment — which she is refusing to do until he provides details on the trial's scope. Neither seems willing to budge.

"Their turn is over," McConnell said about the Democratic-led House. "It's the Senate's turn now to render sober judgment as the framers intended."

Pelosi responded that McConnell's stance "made clear that he will feebly comply with President Trump's cover-up of his abuses of power and be an accomplice to that cover-up."

The House and Senate gavelled in for brief sessions Friday with the sudden crisis in the Middle East only adding to the uncertainty about how lawmakers will proceed with the impeachment trial, only the third in U.S. history.

Trump was impeached last month by the House on charges that he abused power and obstructed Congress in his dealings with Ukraine. Trump withheld nearly \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine, an Eastern European ally that depends on U.S. support to counter Russia, after asking President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to publicly announce an investigation into Trump rival Joe Biden. The aid was ultimately released after Congress objected.

Democrats believe their demands for witnesses are bolstered by new reports about Trump's decision to withhold the aid and unease among some GOP senators over the situation. "The American people deserve the truth," Pelosi said in a statement. "Every Senator now faces a choice: to be loyal to the President or the Constitution."

McConnell has said the trial should start and then senators can decide the scope. Acquittal seems likely in the Senate because Republicans hold a 53-47 seat majority and it takes two thirds of the Senate to convict. But McConnell's leverage is limited during the trial. Either side needs to reach just a 51-vote threshold to call witnesses or seek documents, which could politically test some senators.

As he opened the chamber Friday, McConnell criticized House Democrats as having engineered a "slapdash" impeachment that was the "most rushed, least fair" in history, only to now forcibly postpone the proceedings while they seek more information.

The GOP leader did not defend or criticize the president's actions toward Ukraine. But he invoked the Founding Fathers' vision of the slower-moving Senate as "an institution that could stop momentary hysteria and partisan passions."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer also drew on the founders to pressure Republican senators not to fall lockstep in line with Trump, as they typically do, but fulfill their role as jurors.

"The vital question, of whether or not we have a fair trial, ultimately rests with a majority of the senators in this chamber," Schumer said. He is pressing to hear testimony from at least four new witnesses, all of whom refused to appear in the House proceedings before the House voted to impeach Trump last month. "We need the whole truth," Schumer said. McConnell, he said, has been unable to make "one single argu-

ment" against having witnesses and documents in the trial.

Two Republican senators, Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins, have indicated they were open to hearing from more witnesses and registered their concerns about McConnell's claim that he was working closely with the White House on the format for the trial. Senators up for re-election in 2020 will face particular pressure over their votes.

Trump wants not only acquittal in the trial but also vindication from his GOP allies.

The witnesses that Senate Democrats want to call refused to testify in the House proceedings under orders from the White House. They are Trump's former national security adviser John Bolton, acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and two other officials who were directly involved with Trump's decision to withhold the military assistance for Ukraine. Republicans, in turn, could try to hear from Biden or his son, Hunter Biden, who worked for an energy company in Ukraine while his father was vice president.

More information keeps flowing. A federal judge on Friday allowed a Rudy Giuliani associate indicted on campaign finance charges, Lev Parnas, to turn over documents to Congress as part of the impeachment proceeding. Parnas and another man, Igor Fruman, played key roles in efforts by Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer, to launch a Ukrainian corruption investigation against Democratic presidential candidate Biden.

McConnell showed no signs of deviating from his opening stance. He defended his earlier remarks in which he said he would not be an "impartial juror" in the trial and stuck with his plan to follow the process used during Bill Clinton's impeachment, in which the trial was convened and then votes were taken to decide if additional witnesses were needed. □

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Mississippi prison chief says 4 of 5 killings done by gangs

By JEFF AMY

Associated Press

Mississippi's outgoing prisons chief said Friday that at least some of the five killings of inmates since Sunday stem from gang violence, as guards struggle to maintain control of restive inmates.

"These are trying times for the Mississippi Department of Corrections," Commissioner Pelicia Hall said in a statement Friday, hours after an inmate was found stabbed to death in his cell at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

Denorris Howell, 36, was found before 3 a.m. in his cell, covered in blood with a neck wound, becoming the fifth to die since violence erupted Sunday with a stabbing at South Mississippi Correctional Institute in Leakesville.

Prison leaders are calling the gang fights "major disturbances," but Burton calls what's going on at Parchman "gang-related riots." Hall said investigators believe only four of the five deaths are gang-related. The department didn't immediately say which death was not.

She said the department won't confirm the names of the gangs "for security purposes," but relatives of inmates who spoke to The Associated Press and other news outlets say there's an ongoing confrontation between the Vice Lords and Black Gangster Disciples.

It wouldn't be the first time that the two gangs have warred behind bars in Mississippi, with previous confrontations at Parchman and other prisons over the past 15 years. A 2015 survey found nearly 3,000 Black Gangster Disciple members and nearly 2,000 Vice Lords in prisons statewide.

All state prisons statewide remained locked down Friday, confining inmates to cells and blocking visitors. Besides Howell, Terrandance Dobbins, 40, was killed Sunday at South Mississippi. Walter Gates, 25, was stabbed and several other inmates were injured Tuesday at Parchman during a fight that spread to



In this May 19, 2010, file photograph, traffic moves past the front of the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, Miss.

multiple units of the sprawling prison. Then on Thursday, Gregory Emary, 26, was killed at the Chickasaw County Regional Correctional Facility, a county-run jail that holds state inmates. Also Thursday, 32-year-old Roosevelt Holliman was fatally stabbed at Parchman in a fracas that led to multiple injuries.

Corrections officials have refused so far to say how many people overall have been injured, or whether there have been other violent incidents in prisons.

Candice Dobbins, the sister of Terrandance Dobbins, said she's been told violence began spreading after her brother's death. "Now they're going to war," she told the Clarion Ledger of Jackson.

Candice Dobbins said she first learned of her brother's death after a stranger who has a relative in a Mississippi prison phoned her.

She said state officials later confirmed the death, but have answered no questions, leaving her to try to glean information from inmates.

Terrandance Dobbins was originally sentenced to life for a killing in Adams County, and later was sentenced to more time after an assault on another prisoner at Parchman.

Dobbins said she had been trying to get her brother transferred, saying he felt unsafe at South Mississippi. "Really the prisoners run the

facilities," Dobbins said. "I know guards have to talk with inmates to keep control of other inmates."

The violence has left relatives of prisoners terrified, trying to find out whether loved ones are safe. Sonya Young told the AP that her son has been hospitalized at Parchman since Dec. 23, but said she has "no idea why."

"No one is answering the phones and the website states that they cannot give out any information," she wrote in an email.

Barbarella Ann Isom's twin sons are serving 20 years apiece on armed robbery convictions. One is at South Mississippi and one is at Parchman.

"I wish he would be transferred somewhere else," she said of the son at Parchman. "I know he has to do his time, but I'm afraid for his life."

Mississippi's prison system has struggled to fill guard vacancies, with Hall saying it's difficult to attract people with salaries that start below \$25,000 a year. Some guards end up bringing illegal drugs and cell phones into prisons. Criminal charges were filed in 2014 against 26 state correctional officers.

Some prisons, including South Mississippi, have areas where many prisoners are housed in bunks in one large room, instead of individual cells. This can lead to worsened security

problems. South Mississippi, in Greene County, was locked down for almost all of 2019, in part because of guard shortages.

Hall announced Tuesday that she will resign in mid-January to take a private

sector job, signaling incoming Gov. Tate Reeves won't retain her upon taking office Jan. 14.

Reeves tweeted Friday that he'd been briefed and that the first priority was "to restore order and safety," followed by an investigation and "justice" for those who committed violence. "Any loss of life is tragic and must be addressed," he said, adding "there is much work to be done in our correctional system."

Outgoing Gov. Phil Bryant was on a family vacation, U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker told reporters Friday. The violence came even as U.S. District Judge William Barbour ruled Tuesday that while conditions may have previously been poor at East Mississippi Correctional Facility near Meridian, there's no longer any evidence that the privately run prison is violating inmates' rights. □

Associated Press

Missouri River power from upstream dams increases in 2019

By JAMES MacPHERSON

Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) —

The wet weather that caused so many flooding problems around the Midwest in 2019 had one small silver lining: electric generation from the Missouri River's six upstream dams was up 5.6 percent, federal officials said.

It was the first time this century that the river had back-to-back years producing surplus power, which is good news for consumers. The Western Area Power Administration relies on energy from the dams for the power it sells and must buy electricity on the open market in years when hydropower is underperforming — a cost that eventually is passed to ratepayers. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages dams and reservoirs along the 2,341-mile river, said energy production from the dams in the

Dakotas, Montana and Nebraska was 13 billion kilowatt hours last year, up from 12.3 billion in 2018 and more than 38 percent above the long-term average. The WAPA buys and sells power from 56 hydropower plants around the nation. The Missouri River dams are its second-largest producer of energy that is then sold to rural electric cooperatives, municipal utilities, Indian tribes and other customers. Drought years caused by shallow river levels forced WAPA to spend more than \$1.7 billion since 2000 to fulfill contracts, including \$28.3 million in 2017. WAPA spokeswoman Lisa Meiman said the agency was able to sell at least \$40 million in excess power over the past two years to help offset those losses. "Generation was above average for the past two years," she said. □

Methodists propose split in gay marriage, clergy impasse



In this April 19, 2019, file photo, a gay pride rainbow flag flies along with the U.S. flag in front of the Asbury United Methodist Church in Prairie Village, Kan.

Associated Press

By **TRAVIS LOLLER and GARY FIELDS**

Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

United Methodist Church leaders from around the world and across ideological divides unveiled a plan Friday for a new conservative denomination that would split from the church in an attempt to resolve a decades-long dispute over gay marriage and gay clergy.

The proposal, called "A Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation," envisions an amicable separation in which conservative churches forming a new denomination would retain their assets. The new denomination also would receive \$25 million.

The proposal was signed in December by a 16-member panel, who worked with a mediator and began meeting in October. The panel was formed after it became clear the

impasse over LGBTQ issues was irreconcilable. The next step could come at the church's General Conference in May.

Methodist Bishop Karen Oliveto, the denomination's first openly gay bishop, said the United Methodist Church leadership "was clearly at a point in which we couldn't agree to disagree" over same-sex relationships. "I'm actually really sad that we couldn't build a bridge that could have provided a witness to the world of what unity amid diversity and disagreement could look like." Oliveto was challenged by the denomination's highest court, the Judicial Council, in 2016 when it declared that the bishop's consecration "was incompatible with church law."

However, Oliveto was allowed to remain as the resident bishop of the Mountain Sky Conference, which includes United Method-

ist churches in Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming and a section of Idaho. Asked what a post-separation world looks like for the church to move forward, Oliveto said, "We are no longer using LGBTQ people as scapegoats."

Members of the 13-million-person denomination have been at odds for years over the issue, with members in the United States leading the call for full inclusion for LGBTQ people.

The rift widened last year when delegates meeting in St. Louis voted 438-384 for a proposal called the Traditional Plan, which affirmed bans on LGBTQ-inclusive practices. A majority of U.S.-based delegates opposed that plan but were outvoted by U.S. conservatives teamed with delegates from Methodist strongholds in Africa and the Philippines.

Methodists in favor of allowing gay clergy and gay

marriage vowed to continue fighting. Meanwhile the Wesleyan Covenant Association, representing traditional Methodist practice, had already been preparing for a possible separation.

Concern over the future of the church pushed members, led by Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, to convene a group to share ideas across the theological spectrum.

New York Bishop Thomas Bickerton said that turned into the final panel, made up of moderates, progressives and traditionalists from Africa, Europe, the Philippines and the United States.

Bickerton, who heads 438 Methodist churches in New York, said while he thinks it is an amicable solution, "there is a degree of heartbreak within me because I never thought we would reach this point. However, we are at this point. The dif-

ferences are irreconcilable. This is inevitable."

The Rev. Keith Boyette, president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and one of 16 people on the mediation team that developed and signed the separation proposal, said he is "very hopeful" the plan will be approved.

This is the first time that "respected leaders of groups from every constituency" have come together to form a plan, he said. "And this is the first time that bishops of the church have signed on to an agreement like this."

While other mainline Protestant denominations have embraced gay-friendly practices, the United Methodist Church has not, though acts of defiance by pro-LGBTQ clergy have multiplied. Many have performed same-sex weddings; others have come out as gay or lesbian from the pulpit.

Texas Bishop Scott J. Jones praised the panel for its contribution to the ongoing discussions about human sexuality but "it should be emphasized that a statement by 16 leaders does not necessarily mean that its provisions will be adopted."

"The Protocol itself says it was developed in service to the General Conference delegates who will decide on its adoption or amendment. Other plans may well be considered as alternatives," he said in a statement.

"Significant questions remain to be answered about the Protocol's implementation. The Judicial Council will need to rule on its constitutionality. The feasibility of its financial provisions must also be evaluated."

Bickerton said it is unclear how many members will be lost if the proposal moves forward. "I am sure we will lose a certain percentage. We anticipate that," he said. "It's time for us to get back to the ministry and mission of the church. It's time for us to get back to the ministry and mission of the church." □

ONLINE GROCERY DELIVERY SERVICE*From the Store to your Door!***\$10 OFF** Coupon code:
ARUBATODAY**SAVE TIME
GROCERY SHOP
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MILWAUKEE (AP) — Federal prosecutors in Wisconsin have accused a high-ranking New York City education official of swapping online messages with an undercover police officer posing as a 14-year-old boy and reserving a whirlpool suite for a sexual encounter with him.

David Hay, 39, was arrested Sunday at Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport. He was charged Thursday with child enticement and possession of child pornography. Online federal court records didn't list an attorney for Hay as of early Friday afternoon. He was scheduled for an initial appearance in federal court in Green Bay later in the day. Hay, of Brooklyn, New York, was serving as deputy chief of staff for Richard Carranza, the schools chancellor for New York City's Department of Education, when he was arrested. The New York City Department of Education fired Hay following his arrest.

Matthew Krueger, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, said in a statement Friday that Hay began corresponding in July on a dating app with someone he believed was a 14-year-old boy living in Neenah, Wisconsin. That person was actually an undercover police investigator.

Hay and the investigator traded sexually explicit conversations for months and made plans to meet for sex, according to court documents unsealed Friday.

Hay eventually reserved a



This undated photo provided by Winnebago, Wis., County Sheriff's Office shows David Hay.

Associated Press

whirlpool suite at a Neenah hotel for an encounter with the boy on Saturday night. He canceled the meeting at the last minute, however, messaging the investigator, who was still posing as the boy, that his mother had fallen down the stairs and that he was scheduled to fly out of the state on Sunday.

A search of Hay's phone revealed sexually explicit images of a former Tomah, Wisconsin, high school student, according to court documents and the U.S. attorney's statement. Hay served as principal at Tomah High School from 2011 to 2014. Prior to that he was an administrator at Kettle Moraine High School in southeastern Wisconsin.

Hay faces between 10 years and life in prison if he's convicted of facilitating a child sex crime. He faces up to 10 years behind bars if he's convicted of the child pornography count. □



Shelby County, Tenn., Mayor Lee Harris, seated at desk, holds up a letter reaffirming Tennessee's largest county's commitment to keep resettling refugees on Friday, Jan. 3, 2020, in Memphis, Tenn. Associated Press

Tennessee's largest county to keep welcoming refugees

ADRIAN SAINZ
Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The mayor of Tennessee's largest county on Friday reaffirmed its commitment to welcome refugees, amid a drop in the number of people who are coming to the Memphis area as they flee persecution and war in other countries. Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris held a ceremonial signing of a letter he sent to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last month stating the county's desire to keep welcoming refugees from the around the world who, as Harris' letter says, "embark on arduous and perilous journeys to find safety." "We have a moral duty to help those in need, those in dire circumstances," Harris said during a news conference at his office in downtown Memphis.

The commitment by Harris,

a Democrat, follows Republican Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee's decision to continue to resettle refugees. Last month, Lee rejected the option offered to states by President Donald Trump's administration to stop refugee resettlement.

In Tennessee, Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga also have said that they want to keep accepting refugees.

In September, Trump slashed the number of refugees allowed into the U.S. and authorized state and local governments to refuse to accept them. An executive order says that if a state or a locality has not consented to receive refugees under the State Department's Reception and Placement Program, then refugees should not be resettled within the state or locality unless the secretary of state decides otherwise.

Trump's order lets local governments decide on refugee resettlement if the state opts in.

Last year, only 44 refugees settled in Shelby County, the state's largest by population, said World Relief Memphis Director P.J. Moore.

That number was down from 56 in 2018, Moore said. The county can handle up to 400 refugees per year, he said.

World Relief Memphis teams with local religious and community groups to resettle refugees.

Moore called the decrease in refugees a "dramatic dropoff" that can be attributed to policies coming out of Washington. Trump has signed off on a plan that continues a dramatic drop in the number of refugees taken in by the U.S. to no more than 18,000 in fiscal year 2020. □

'A more dangerous world': US killing triggers global alarm

By JOHN LEICESTER

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Global powers warned Friday that the American airstrike responsible for killing Iran's top general made the world more dangerous and that escalation could set the entire Mideast aflame. Some U.S. allies suggested Iran shared in the blame by provoking the attack.

The deaths of Gen. Qasem Soleimani and associates drew immediate cries for revenge from Tehran and a chorus of appeals from other countries for reduced tensions between Iran and the United States. As U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called world capitals to defend the attack, diplomats scrambled to chart a way forward.

"A further escalation that sets the whole region on fire needs to be prevented," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said. He said he told Pompeo that the strike had not "made it easier to reduce tensions." But Maas also noted that the assault "followed a series of dangerous Iranian provocations."

The White House justified the killings with a tweet alleging that Soleimani "was actively developing plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region." The 62-year-



Pakistani Shiite Muslims demonstrate over the U.S. airstrike in Iraq that killed Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qasem Soleimani, near the U.S. Consulate in Lahore, Pakistan, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020.
Associated Press

old led Iran's elite Quds Force, which undertakes the country's foreign campaigns. Iranian state TV reported that 10 people were killed in the airstrike near Baghdad's airport.

"He should have been taken out many years ago!" U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted.

Oil prices surged as investors fretted about Mideast stability. Saudi Arabia, Iran's top rival in the region, urged restraint and called on the international community "to ensure the stability of such a vital region to the entire world."

Social media flooded with alarm. Twitter users morbidly turned "WWIII" into the top trending term worldwide.

"We are waking up in a more dangerous world. Military escalation is always dangerous," France's deputy minister for foreign affairs, Amelie de Montchalin, told RTL radio.

Russia characterized the killings as "fraught with serious consequences." Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova suggested that Trump ordered the strike with one eye on his re-election campaign.

"The U.S. military were acting on orders of U.S. politicians. Everyone should remember and understand that U.S. politicians have their interests, considering that this year is an election year," Zakharova said in a TV interview.

His election opponents characterized Trump as reckless. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said the president "tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox."

China described itself as "highly concerned" and urged all parties "especially the United States, to main-

tain calm and restraint and avoid further escalation of tensions." U.S. allies Britain, Germany and Canada suggested that Iran bore some responsibility for the confrontation.

German government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer described the strike as "a reaction to a whole series of military provocations." She pointed to attacks on tankers and a Saudi oil facility, among other events.

"We are at a dangerous escalation point," she said.

The British foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, said his government had "always recognized the aggressive threat posed by the Iranian Quds force." Following Soleimani's death, "we urge all parties to de-escalate," he said. "Further conflict is in none of our interests."

Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said Soleimani's "aggressive actions have had a destabilizing effect in the region and beyond."

There were warnings the killing could set back efforts to stamp out remnants of the Islamic State group.

A top European Union official, Charles Michel, said "the risk is a generalized flare-up of violence in the whole region and the rise of obscure forces of terrorism that thrive at times of religious and nationalist tensions." □



Oliver Spasovski, the new prime minister of the caretaker government, greets the lawmakers after the parliament voted in favor on a session in Skopje, North Macedonia, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

Associated Press

SKOPJE, North Macedonia (AP) — North Macedonia's

parliament on Friday approved a new caretaker government under the

North Macedonia's PM resigns, caretaker government elected

country's former interior minister, after Zoran Zaev resigned as prime minister ahead of previously agreed early elections on April 12.

Under a deal made by major political parties, the caretaker government will be headed by Oliver Spasovski, who served in Zaev's center-left administration.

Zaev had announced the early election noting his "disappointment and outrage" at the European Union's failure to start membership talks with North Macedonia and fellow Balkan nation Albania last year.

North Macedonia had previously agreed — under intense pressure from the EU — to sign a historic deal that normalized relations with neighboring Greece, and had believed that membership talks would go ahead.

But France, supported by Denmark and the Netherlands, strongly opposed membership talks, calling for an overhaul of the EU's procedures for admitting new members. Zaev had staked his political future on the 2018 agreement with Greece that changed the country's name from

Macedonia, settling a decades-long dispute.

Greece considered that the name "Macedonia" was an attempt to steal its own Macedonian heritage and might imply territorial designs on its northern province of Macedonia. Included in the accord was a statement that the current state of Macedonia and the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia are unrelated.

The agreement was ratified despite heavy criticism by opposition parties and hardline nationalists in both countries. □



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Uncharted Brexit waters: UK's Boris Johnson faces 2020 tests

By GREGORY KATZ
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — After a remarkable political turnaround, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is on the verge of taking Britain out of the European Union with the enthusiastic support of a strong majority in Parliament.

After suffering a string of parliamentary defeats over Brexit — plus the ignominy of being told by Britain's Supreme Court that his suspension of Parliament last year was unlawful — Johnson cruised to victory in the country's Dec. 12 election and finally got his landmark Brexit bill passed before Christmas.

Expectations for the coming year are high, fueled by Johnson's upbeat approach. He promised in his New Year's message that resolving the Brexit stalemate means Britain "can start a new chapter in the history of our country, in which we come together and move forward united, unleashing the enormous potential of the British people."

He pledged to "work my socks off" to unite the country. The message was pre-recorded; Johnson spent the holiday on the Caribbean island of Mustique with girlfriend Carrie Symonds.

Johnson's predecessor, former Prime Minister Theresa May, was stung by repeated rebukes from a hostile Parliament. Johnson, however, is in a much stronger position with a healthy Conservative Party majority in the House of Commons



In this file photo dated Saturday, Dec. 14, 2019, a British flag, right, and England's red cross, fly in front of the Houses of Parliament in London.

Associated Press

after the election that he called two years early. When Johnson's tenure at 10 Downing Street began in July with a series of defeats in Parliament, many observers said he likely would have the shortest reign of any recent prime minister. Instead, he has won a five-year term and left the main opposition Labour Party in near-total disarray.

With Parliament remade in his image, Johnson expects to split Britain off from the 27 other EU nations on Jan. 31, becoming the first nation ever to leave the bloc. Then the truly difficult part begins as Britain launches contentious trade talks that will define its new relationship with Europe, its key trading partner.

Momentous changes are coming, but the immedi-

ate impact of Britain's departure will be blunted because of a yearlong transition period. There will still be unfettered trade between Britain and the EU and the free movement of people throughout 2020.

He faces outright hostility from Scotland's leader, whose region wanted to stay in the EU, and questions about whether Brexit may nudge U.K. member Northern Ireland closer to the Republic of Ireland and threaten its status as part of the U.K.

There is intense time pressure on the EU trade talks, which must conclude by the end of 2020 unless both sides agree on an extension by the end of June. That is an option Johnson has ruled out, raising once again the prospect that

Britain might sever all EU ties without a new deal in place. Economists say such a "no-deal" Brexit would sabotage Britain's economy.

Most trade talks take much longer than one year to complete. These particular negotiations are unusually fraught because of uncertainty surrounding how trade between Northern Ireland and Ireland will be governed once the U.K. is no longer part of the EU. There have been persistent warnings that imposing new trade barriers and tariffs could jeopardize the gains brought about by Northern Ireland's 1998 Good Friday peace deal and rekindle the violence there that has been largely dormant for two decades. Brexit may nudge Northern

Ireland toward uniting with Ireland by keeping Northern Ireland closely bound to Ireland in trade terms and imposing new paperwork that would slow trade between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain.

Johnson also faces a Brexit-fueled confrontation with Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon that poses another threat to the U.K.'s unity. Sturgeon and her Scottish National Party are lobbying hard for a second independence referendum on whether Scotland should remain in the U.K. or strike its own path as an independent country.

Sturgeon argues that since Scottish voters rejected Brexit in the 2016 referendum Scotland is being "dragged out of the EU against its will" and should be given the chance to opt for independence, even though the prospect was voted down in 2014.

Johnson's larger-than-expected margin of victory and his Conservatives' strong performance in traditional working-class Labour Party strongholds in northern and central England give him a chance to consolidate power. The Conservatives now have 365 seats in the 650-seat Parliament to Labour's 202. It is not clear yet whether Johnson will navigate a shift to the center, patching together a deal that keeps the EU trading relationship as open as possible, or whether he will continue to court the Conservatives' hard-Brexit wing, which is ready for an abrupt rupture with Europe. □

Messy start: Croatia to elect new leader amid EU presidency

By **DARKO BANDIC**

Associated Press

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) —

Croatia's bitterly contested presidential race is headed for a runoff this weekend to decide whether a conservative or a liberal will become the new head of state while the country holds the European Union presidency for the first time. Incumbent President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic from the governing conservative party is facing leftist former Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic in what analysts say could be a highly unpredictable and tight vote on Sunday.

The two made it into the runoff following the first round of voting on Dec. 22. Milanovic had a slight lead over Grabar Kitarovic, but opinion polls suggest there's no clear favorite.

Here's a look at what's at stake at the ballot:

THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE IN CROATIA

It is a largely ceremonial post compared to the prime minister, who holds more actual power, yet the president still formally commands the army and represents the country abroad. However, the president is chosen in a direct public vote, which gives the head of state additional political weight and a important voice on key topics in society.

WHY IS SUNDAY'S VOTE IMPORTANT?

This presidential election



Incumbent president and presidential candidate Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic greets supporters in her headquarter in Zagreb, Croatia, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2019.

is important because it could shake up the political scene in Croatia during a crucial EU presidency that will include presiding over Britain's departure from the bloc and the start of post-Brexit trade negotiations. The EU presidency rotates among the bloc's 28 members every six months, and since Croatia only joined the EU in 2013, this is the country's first time at the helm.

The vote also is a test for the ruling Croatian Democratic Union party ahead of this year's parliamentary election. An opposition victory on Sunday from Croa-

tia's 3.8 million voters would be a blow for the conservatives, weakening their grip on power. Croatia took over the EU presidency on Jan 1. The European Commission members will visit Zagreb on Jan. 9.

WHAT DID THE FIRST ROUND LOOK LIKE?

Milanovic came out ahead after the first round of balloting, trailed by Grabar Kitarovic and right-wing singer Miroslav Skoro, who garnered nearly a quarter of the vote with his anti-establishment, nationalist campaign.

It's not clear how Skoro's support will distribute in the

runoff. He has not backed any of the candidates and vowed to render his own ballot void on Sunday. Analysts say Skoro's votes could go both ways, although Grabar Kitarovic is ideologically closer.

WHO IS RUNNING?

The 51-year-old, U.S.-educated Grabar Kitarovic had a diplomatic career before becoming Croatia's first female president in 2015. She has sought to portray herself as a pan-national figure who relates to all Croats, but has raised eyebrows for flirting with the extreme right.

In a bid to lure Skoro's

right-wing voters, Grabar Kitarovic evoked the Croatian unity during the 1991-95 war that followed the split from the Serb-led Yugoslavia. She was mocked in the first round because of a series of gaffes during the campaign.

The 53-year-old Milanovic is backed by Croatia's liberal opposition parties, including his Social Democrats, but liberals have been struggling to regain clout in the predominantly right-leaning nation.

Prone to populist outbursts while prime minister, Milanovic now says he has learned from the experience and matured. He tells the voters to give him a chance to surprise them.

KEY FACTS ABOUT CROATIA

Home to 4.2 million people, Croatia joined the EU after coming out of a devastating war in the 1990s that left over 10,000 people dead and stalled economic and other reforms.

Although a lot of time has passed since the war, Croatia's economy still has catching up to do with the rest of the EU and corruption is believed to be widespread. That is why many Croats, especially young people, have been leaving for more opportunities in other EU nations.

The war remains a politically relevant topic in Croatia, a predominantly conservative nation where the Catholic Church plays an important role. □



The Montenegrin flag flying from the Montenegrin Embassy, is targeted with fireworks by Serbian ultra-nationalists during a protest against a religion rights law adopted by Montenegro's parliament last month, during a mass protest in Belgrade, Serbia, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020.

Associated Press

Montenegro denounces protest attack on its embassy in Serbia

By **DUSAN STOJANOVIC**

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) —

Montenegro on Friday strongly denounced aggression against its embassy in Serbia during a protest by thousands of ultra-nationalists, saying the actions of soccer hooligans who threw flares and chanted "Set it on fire" represented an attack on the country's independence. The crowd targeted the unguarded embassy in Belgrade and tried to burn the Montenegrin flag during the Thurs-

day night protest of a religion rights law adopted by Montenegro's parliament last month. Serbs say the law discriminates against the Serbian Orthodox Church. Montenegro Prime Minister Dusko Markovic tweeted that the embassy attack was an "uncivilized" act and another challenge to his small country's independence and freedom. Montenegro split from much larger Serbia following a 2006 referendum. About one-third of the small Balkan country's 620,000

citizens declare themselves as Serbs and want close ties with Belgrade. Led by the Serbian Orthodox Church and backed by Serbia's state propaganda, pro-Serb Montenegrins have been holding daily protest marches against the new religion rights law. They say the law will allow the Montenegrin state to impound Serbian Orthodox Church property, including monasteries, churches and other assets. The Montenegrin government has repeatedly denied those claims. □

Russia halts oil supplies to Belarus in push for closer ties

By YURAS KARMANAU

Associated Press

MINSK, Belarus (AP) — Russia has halted oil supplies to Belarus as talks on strengthening economic ties remained stalled over concerns that Russia could effectively swallow up its neighbor.

In a case that has echoes of Russia's relationship with Ukraine before it annexed the Crimean Peninsula, Belarus' state-owned oil company said Friday that Moscow has stopped supplying crude until contracts for this year are drawn up. Belarus' two main refineries were operating at low capacity, running on reserves.

Russian oil company Transneft confirmed the suspension, which does not affect oil transit to Europe or the supply of natural gas. Later on Friday Belarus suspended its oil exports, which contribute up to 20% of annual GDP. State-owned oil company Belneftkhim said there were enough reserves to cover the country's needs.

Belarus relies on Russia for more than 80% of its overall energy needs, including gas. Over 90% of its crude oil imports come from Rus-



In this file photo taken on Friday, Dec. 20, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko walk before a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Associated Press

sia. And it has been relying on discounted prices and loans from Russia for more than a quarter century. But it has one point of leverage: Russia depends on Belarus to ship oil to wealthier markets in the rest of Europe. About 10% of Western Europe's oil supplies come from Russia, via a pipeline transiting Belarus. The Kremlin has recently increased pressure on its ally, raising energy prices and cutting subsidies. It argues

that Belarus should accept closer economic integration if it wants to continue receiving energy resources at Russia's domestic prices. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko held two rounds of talks in December, but failed to reach an agreement on deeper integration and on oil and gas prices.

Putin said Russia was not ready to "subsidize" energy supplies without a closer

economic integration with Belarus, and Lukashenko insisted he would not sign off on the integration until the issues with oil and gas supplies were resolved.

In late December, Lukashenko ordered his government to look for alternative oil suppliers, though in practice that will be difficult considering the country's near-total reliance on Russia. There are concerns in Belarus that the economic discussions are a

plot by Russia to swallow up Belarus. Those concerns have been fueled by Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and its support for separatist insurgents in eastern Ukraine.

Before relations soured completely with Ukraine, Russia had likewise used energy supplies as political leverage to keep the country in its economic orbit and from developing closer ties with Europe. There also has been speculation that Putin, who has been in power for nearly two decades, could contemplate a merger with Belarus as a way to stay at the helm of the new union state of Russia and Belarus after his current Russian presidential term expires in 2024.

Lukashenko repeatedly rejected the idea, vowing that his country would never become part of Russia.

"Russia has started to strong-arm Minsk by trying to get Belarus' Soviet-style economy off its oil needle, but Lukashenko is fighting really hard, as he doesn't want to become a Russian governor," said Alexander Klaskovsky, a Minsk-based political analyst. □

Taiwan defense officials meet after crash kills top officer

Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen convened a meeting of top defense officials and urged them Friday to be on a lookout for military developments concerning China following a helicopter crash that killed the island's top military officer and other prominent personnel.

In a tweet, Tsai said the morning conference focused on ensuring military morale, security in and around the Taiwan Strait and the importance of "complete equipment inspections."

The meeting followed the grounding for inspection of Taiwan's 52 UH-60M Black Hawk choppers belonging to the air force, the army and the National Airborne Service Corps., the agency responsible for

search and rescue operations. Thursday morning's crash in forested mountains outside the capital Taipei killed eight people, including chief of the general staff Gen. Shen Yi-ming. A former pilot and air force chief, Shen, 62, had since July been largely responsible for overseeing the self-governing island's defense against China.

"The best way for us to honor the memory of the fallen is to ensure Taiwan's security and maintain military morale," Tsai wrote.

In a video handout from the Presidential Office, Tsai is shown asking officials including the defense minister to "please be vigilant and pay close attention to military developments around the Taiwan Strait."

"We need to respond quickly to any military deploy-



In this March 7, 2019, file photo, Taiwanese top military official Shen Yi-ming salutes as he is introduced to journalists during a press conference in Taipei, Taiwan.

Associated Press

ments to ensure security across the strait," Tsai said. The helicopter's flight data recorder was recovered on Friday morning and, if it was not damaged, an analysis should be completed within 24 hours.

Others killed in the crash included both pilots, the deputy head of the Political Warfare Bureau and the deputy chief of the General Staff for Intelligence, while two lieutenant generals and a major general

were among the five survivors. The crash, which is under investigation, is not expected to affect the holding of the election, which Tsai is highly favored to win, but will require an urgent reshuffling of top military staff. Questions have also been raised as to why so many high-ranking officers were aboard a single flight. China threatens to use military force if necessary to annex what it considers part of its territory. A vacuum within Taiwan's military leadership could embolden it to step up its military intimidation.

Shen's death comes as Taiwan's military is undergoing a substantial upgrade with the arrival of the most advanced version of the U.S. F-16V fighter jets, along with tanks, missiles and improved military software. □

'Millions of sparks': Weather raises Australia's fire danger

By SHONAL GANGULY
STEVE McMORRAN

Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Wildfires raging across Australia have prompted one of the largest evacuations in the country's history as what is already the worst season on record is likely to become even more devastating due to hot weather and strong winds.

More than 200 fires were burning, and warnings of extreme danger to come Saturday prompted mass evacuations. Traffic was gridlocked as people fled and firefighters escorted convoys of evacuees as fires threatened to close roads. Navy ships were called in to pluck hundreds of people stranded on beaches.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews declared a disaster across much of the eastern part of the state, allowing the government to order evacuations in an area with as many as 140,000 permanent residents and tens of thousands more vacationers.

"If you can leave, you must leave," Andrews said.

The early and devastating start to Australia's summer wildfires has already burned about 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres) of land, left at least 19 people dead, and destroyed more than 1,400 homes. That's more acres burned in Australia than any one year in



A firefighter covers his face from block smoke as he battles a fire near Bendalong, Australia, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

the U.S. since Harry Truman was president.

In South Australia state, fire officials said the weather conditions were cause for concern because fires were still burning or smoldering.

"The ignition sources are already there," Country Fire Service chief officer Mark Jones said. "There are millions of sparks out there ready to go if they break containment lines."

This week, at least 445 homes were destroyed on the New South Wales southern coast and dozens were burned in Victoria. Ten deaths have been confirmed in the two states

this week, and Victoria authorities also said 28 people are missing. Fires are also burning in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

The navy evacuated hundreds from Mallacoota, a coastal town in Victoria cut off for days by wildfires that forced as many as 4,000 residents and tourists to shelter on beaches. Landing craft ferried people to the HMAS Choules offshore. Evacuees waiting to board the ship described smoke and embers flying everywhere when the fires were at their worst.

"It's just scary waiting," Dani Barmeister told Channel

Nine.

Choules Commander Scott Houlihan said 963 people had signed up for evacuation by sea and more had been airlifted to safety.

In New South Wales, a state of emergency and a total fire ban were in place. State Rural Fire Service deputy commissioner Rob Rogers urged people to not wait to leave, noting four people in the state died in their cars as they made late attempts to flee.

"We know people have got a little bit of fire fatigue. They've been dealing with this now for months," Rogers said. "But we need people to stay focused. Tomorrow

is not the day to drop your guard."

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he was inclined to cancel a scheduled trip to India later this month because of the wildfires. In December, he cut short a family holiday in Hawaii in the face of public anger at his absence.

He made the remarks in Bairnsdale, Victoria, where he received a warmer welcome than he had in another wildfire-ravaged town a day earlier.

Morrison cut short Thursday's visit to Cobargo in New South Wales when locals yelled at him, called him an "idiot" and criticized him for the lack of equipment to deal with the fires in town. In a radio interview, Morrison said he understood the anger of people affected by the fires.

"People are angry and people are raw and people are upset," he said.

"Whether they are angry with me or they are angry about the situation, all I know is they are hurting and it's my job to be there to try and offer some comfort and support."

In an interview late Friday with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "A Current Affair," Morrison was defensive about his handling of the crisis. He denied ignoring the warnings of fire chiefs that Australia was heading into a catastrophic fire season. □

Inmate dies in new riot at Mexico jail where 16 were killed



In this May 16, 2009 file photo, soldiers patrol outside the Regional Center for Social Reintegration in Cieneguillas, Mexico.

Associated Press

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Another inmate was killed Thursday at a prison in northern Mexico where 16 inmates died during a riot on New Year's Eve.

Security officials in Zacatecas state said four other prisoners were injured in the latest riot at the Cieneguillas prison, where 16 prisoners died on Tuesday.

The Public Safety Department said the prison had been brought back under control. Zacatecas state security secretary Ismael Camberos Hernández

told the Milenio television station that inmates angry over the Tuesday riot had attacked prisoners they accused of betraying them that day.

He said the prisoner had been battered to death by fellow prisoners who detached a metal cell door and bashed him with it. The four wounded Thursday also suffered injuries from blows.

But in Tuesday's riot, authorities confiscated four guns that they believe were smuggled in during visiting hours. Prison guards were placed under investi-

gation after the riot.

Not all of the victims in Tuesday's riot died from gunshot wounds. Some were stabbed and others beaten with objects. No guards or police were wounded.

Local media reported the prison held members of various gangs and cartels, including the Sinaloa cartel and the Gulf and Northeast cartels.

Such killings frequently involve score settling between rival cartel members or a battle for control of the prison's illicit business. □

LOCAL



For honorary Emerald Ambassador Carolyn Pollack-Kruel: Life's Milestone moments are sweeter on Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Aruba has many longtime visitors dedicated to returning to the island time after time, but few are more devoted and engaged than Carolyn Pollack-Kruel, of Pennsylvania, celebrating forty years of vacationing here, usually during the holiday season.

Not only has Carolyn been returning frequently each year over the decades, usually accompanied by her mother† and cousin†, but she has shared some of the happiest occasions of her life with her "extended Aruban family." Each year, while they were alive, Carolyn hosted extravagant birthday parties for her mother and cousin, with all their growing entourage of dear Aruban friends attending.

While they vacationed here in 2005, Carolyn and her husband George picked out her engagement ring at Shiva's, having established a close friendship with the Alwani family. George officially slipped the ring on her finger during a delightful dinner shared with Shea Lichtensteint and his wife, Joyce, another island couple with which they shared a long, active friendship.

Naturally, after being officially married in Pennsylvania, Carolyn and George had to have all their Aruban friends present to share a stunning spiritual ceremony here at the Santa Ana church in Noord. It is very unusual for the Catholic churches of Aruba to marry non-resident couples, but Father Rene, who had grown very close to the newlyweds over the years, was pleased to join them in matrimony.

These landmark moments demonstrate Carolyn and George's deep commitment to the local community and its people; they

are very active and generous in the church and other traditional island activities. They have even danced down the streets of Oranjestad befeathered and sequined during the annual Carnival parades! This year, Carolyn is celebrating 40 years of returning to Aruba since she first fell in love with the island in 1979.

The presentation of an Emerald Certificate and coin was conducted during a festive New Year's Eve dinner at the Ritz Carlton's Casa Nonna restaurant. Marouska Heyliger of the Aruba Tourism Authority, had the pleasure to honor Carolyn, who has gone above and beyond being an Ambassador of Goodwill. Representatives of the Ritz-Carlton Aruba, especially Milouska "Miko" Briezen, were also present at this memorable event.

The occasion has evoked another memorable event, a reunion with Nancy Baty, who first convinced Carolyn to vacation on Aruba in 1979, when they both worked for TWA. "I had never even heard of Aruba when Nancy approached me with an incredible deal being offered to airline employees," she recalls. "We were able to stay at the Tamarijn Beach Hotel for only \$15 a night, which we split! Imagine!

As both Carolyn and Nancy

were quite fetching young ladies who were touted in the local papers as "Beauties on the Beach," they found themselves not lacking for dinner invitations from some nice young men from Canada, so were able to truly sample some of the fine restaurants that have built Aruba's reputation.

The girls returned once a year for the next five years, until they were laid off from TWA along with several other employees. Nancy took a job with Piedmont Airlines and moved away to Virginia Beach, and Carolyn went on to start her own very successful travel agency, Ambassatour. As an agent, her top recommendation to her clients seeking a Caribbean holiday has always been Aruba, and very likely contributed substantially to growing Aruba's visitors from the Pittsburgh area.

This year's honoring is particularly poignant for both Carolyn and Nancy, as the latter is returning to Aruba for the first time in 37 years, to share this special event with her good friend.

Nancy and her husband Mark Baty could not resist joining Carolyn for this 40th year anniversary trip. They arrived on December 30, Nancy's birthday, and Carolyn treated them to a fabulous dinner with a view at La Trattoria El Faro Blanco,



which did not even exist during Nancy's last visit. Nancy was excited and thrilled to see how the island has grown. She stayed with Carolyn and enjoyed

a whirlwind tour of all the new hotspots that one can fit into three days.

"I knew that the trip to Aruba would be worth the time and expense," expressed Nancy, who has visited Carolyn over the years whenever she returned to Pittsburgh to see family. "We had not known each other well when I first proposed we vacation together on Aruba, but we have since traveled to many places over the years, including an African Safari. I was certain Mark and I would enjoy our time here and meeting the many friends Carolyn has made here over the years; with Carolyn, especially on Aruba, Life is a Celebration!" □



Happy Birthday Earth!

By **Melissa Martin**

OHIO, US — The hanging globe we live on is another year older. “Happy Birthday to you. Happy Birthday, Mother Earth. Happy Birthday to you.” Sing along. Earth is our home. How old is earth? It depends on who you ask. A creationist and an evolutionist will give different answers. A scientist and a Bible scholar will give different answers.

Who named our Earth? Its name comes from the old English and Germanic words meaning ‘the ground.’ Who or what created Earth? ‘In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was without form and void.’ The other theory is called ‘Big Bang.’

What gifts can we give to Earth; a planet that sustains our lives. Air, land, water—essential elements for the human race. Food from the soil and the sea. Oxygen from the atmosphere and the trees. Shelters with wood, rocks, bricks, marble. Precious metals and jewels are harvested from Earth.

We can do better at protecting our Earth home.

Some elementary schools support “Our Amazing Earth curriculum.” We need to teach the young how to take care of our planet. Nature is a learning playground.

“A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people.”—Franklin D. Roosevelt

Clean Up the World, established in 1993, is a not-for-profit, non-government apolitical event that unites communities with a common focus to protect the environment. Clean Up the World has engaged an estimated 35 million volunteers across 133 countries, making it one of the largest community-based environmental campaigns in the world. Community groups, schools, businesses, and local governments join as Members and carry out activities that address local environmental issues. By facilitating local action, Clean Up the World brings about global environmental change. www.cleanuptheworld.org.

Earth Day is April 22 of ev-



ery year. April 22, 2020 will mark 50 years of Earth Day. www.earthday.org. Earth Day Network is the world's largest recruiter to the environmental movement, working with more than 75,000 partners in over 190 countries to drive positive action for our planet.

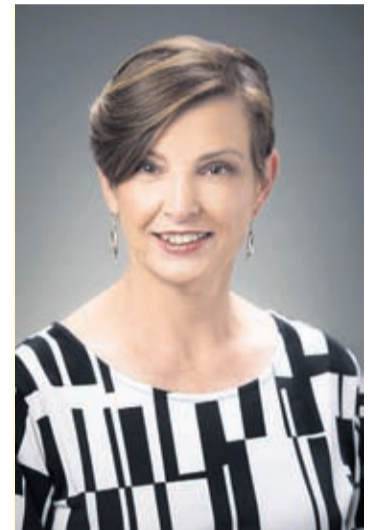
The United National General Assembly has recognized “the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.” Since the 1992 Earth Summit, safe drinking water has been made available to some 1.7 billion people around the world. The International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Sustainable Development,’ started on World Water Day, 22 March 2018, and will end on World

Water Day, 22 March 2028.

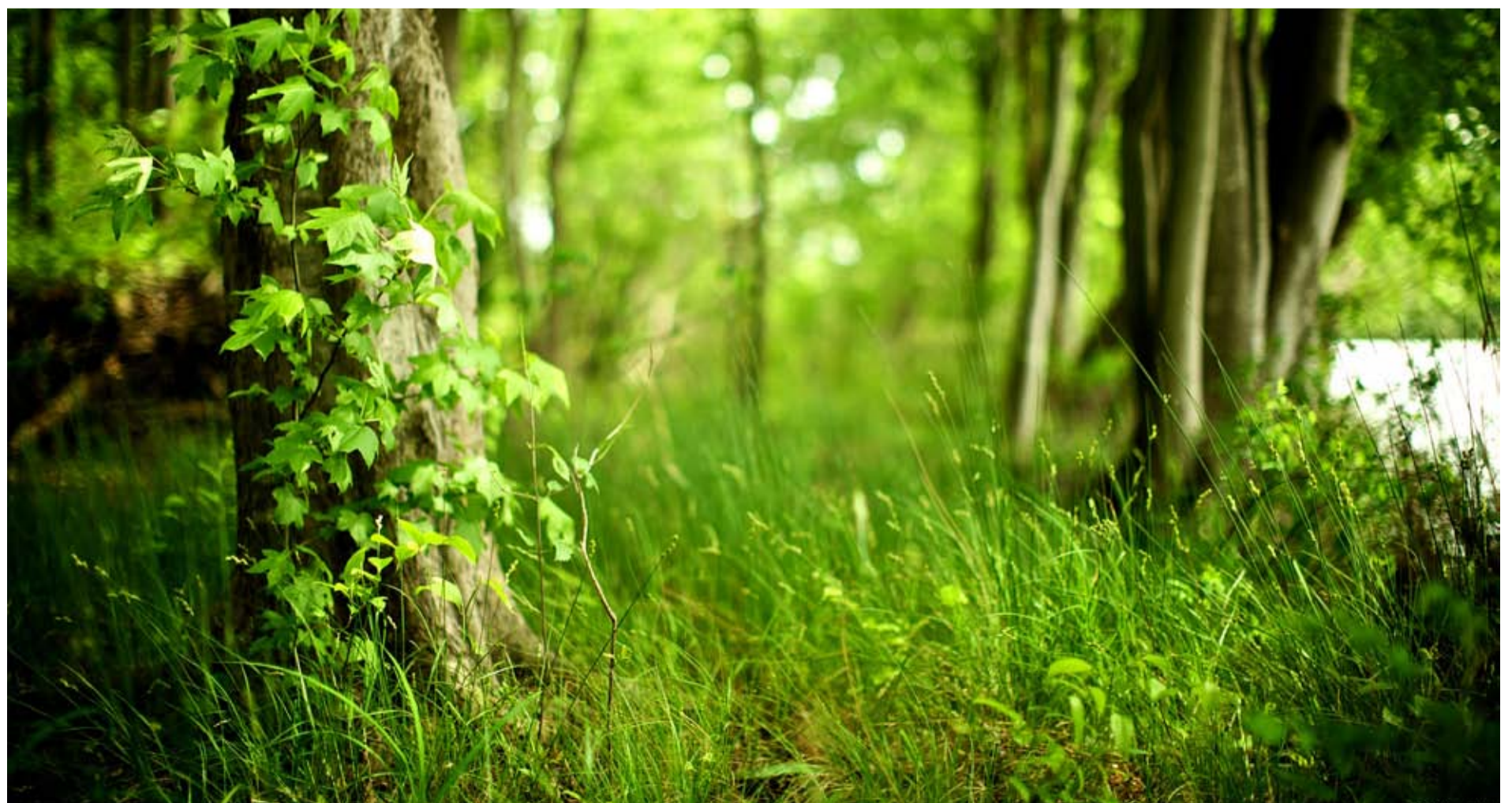
What can you do to help our Earth in 2020? Volunteer with a cleanup group. Teach your children not to litter. Watch National Geographic with your family and engage in ongoing conversations about our amazing planet. Check-out www.kids.nationalgeographic.com. Cleanup behind yourself when you visit a park. Use a reusable water bottle. Recycle ink cartridges.

“When the last tree is cut and the last fish killed, the last river poisoned, then you will see that you can't eat money.”—John May, The Greenpeace Story

Happy Birthday Earth!



Melissa Martin, Ph.D., is an author, columnist, educator, and therapist. She lives in US.



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Aruba to Me

ORANJESTAD – Aruba Today likes to welcome readers to participate in our newspaper. You can see that in our Honored Guest-publications, specials like on Valentine's Day and on other occasions. Throughout the year you are always welcome to send us your vacation picture(s) together with completing the sentence: Aruba to me is (Email: news@arubatoday.com)

For today's newspaper we received some lovely pictures from **Peter Stavrinis of Albertson, NY**. He wrote to us:

"Aruba to me is.... A place to celebrate with family"



Peter and Despina Stavrinis will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary this year. For them there is no better place to celebrate this special occasion with the whole family than their favorite place on earth, Aruba.

They have been visiting the island every year for over 20 years now. This past holiday was quite special since the whole family was here to spend it together. After this visit, Peter is sure the whole family will make it an annual trip now.

While being on the island Peter and Despina love reading Aruba Today and they noticed the 'Aruba To Me' section and wanted to share with our readers their story and their 6 grandchildren, who are their pride and joy. ☐

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Meet Photographer Jeroen Lucas

ORANJESTAD — The cover picture of the Aruba Today Facebook page will show a picture of a local photographer every couple of months. We just love culture and would like to support our local talents, therefore Aruba Today chooses to be a platform for showcasing art. The newest cover picture is the work of the talented Jeroen Lucas from Aruba Paradise Photos. Before him we had the honor to showcase pictures of photographers Michael-Anthony, Anuar Habibe, Armando Goedgedrag and Jonathan Petit.

Jeroen Lucas is a Dutch photographer, based in Aruba. Out of love for photography together with love for the island Aruba, Aruba Paradise Photos was born in 2015. "Taking my camera and drone with me as I explore every inch of the island. With free time at hand and lots of energy I



For more information:
Jeroen Lucas
+297 630 5412
arubaparadisephotos.com

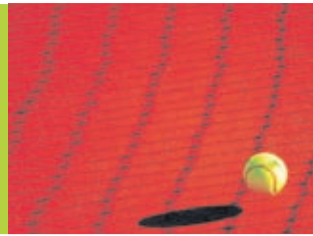
want to shoot beautiful images of our Island for you to enjoy."

Going to spots that you have never seen before, or even think "Is that in Aru-

ba?!" Lucas is trying to give you that something extra. Looking at his pictures

Aruba Today can only say: yes, this is something extra indeed! □

SPORTS



In this Monday, Jan. 18, 2016, file photo, former New Orleans Saints NFL football player Steve Gleason is shown during an interview in New Orleans.

Associated Press

Gleason to receive Congressional Gold Medal Jan. 15

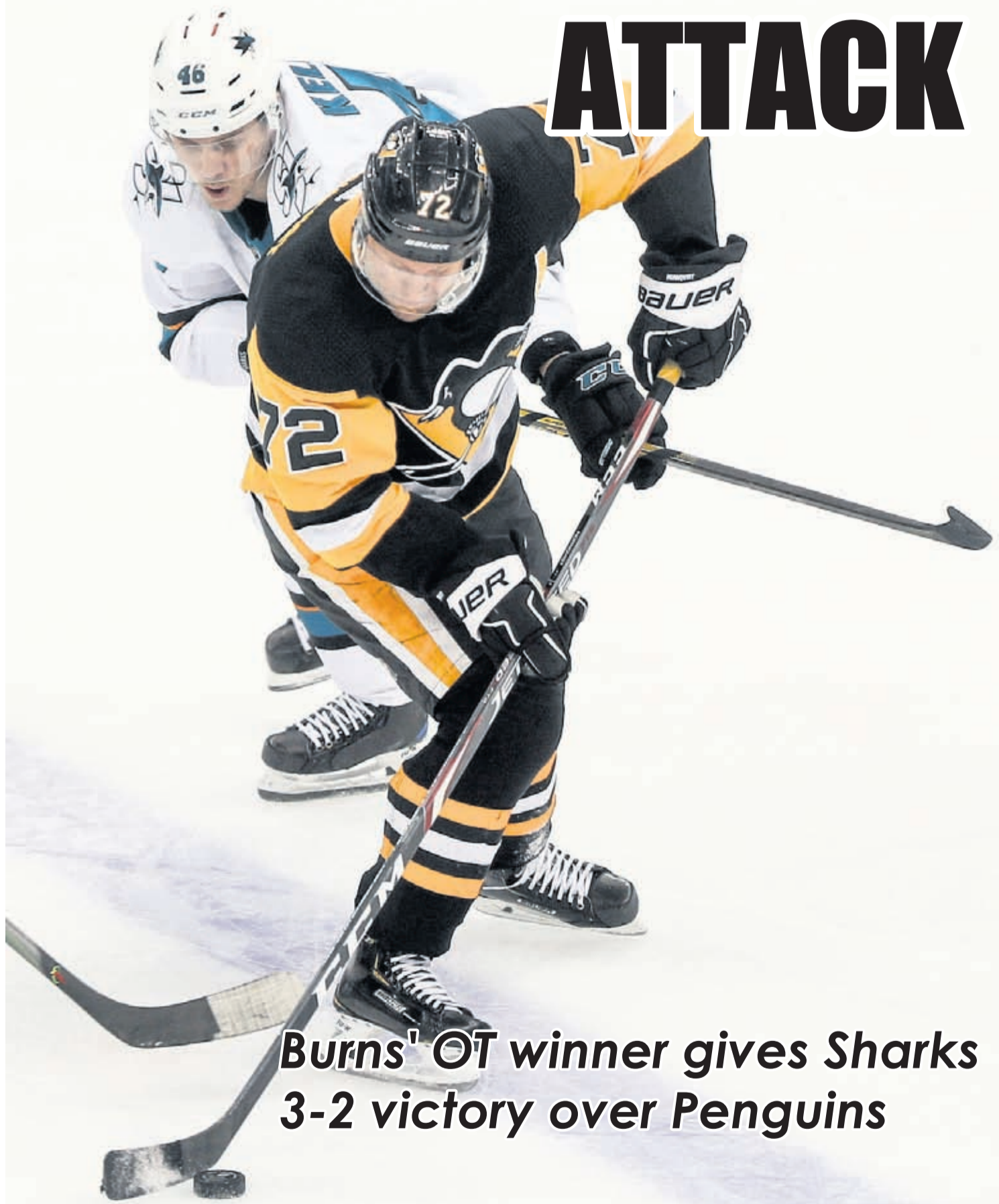
By REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Former New Orleans Saints player Steve Gleason, who became a leading advocate for people struggling with Lou Gehrig's disease after he was diagnosed with the paralyzing condition, will be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal during a ceremony on Jan. 15.

"Steve Gleason has shown tremendous courage and resolve in the face of ALS. On the field, Gleason is best known for his electrifying blocked punt during the Saints' first game in the rebuilt Superdome after 2005's Hurricane Katrina. The city was still rebuilding from the devastating hurricane when Gleason dove to block a punt in the opening minutes of the game against rival Atlanta Falcons.

The stadium itself had to be rebuilt after the storm tore open its roof as thousands of people sheltered inside. □

SHARK ATTACK



Burns' OT winner gives Sharks 3-2 victory over Penguins

Pittsburgh Penguins' Patric Hornqvist (72) brings the puck up ice as San Jose Sharks' Joel Kellman (46) defends during the first period of an NHL hockey game Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020, in Pittsburgh.

Associated Press

Niemann opens with 66 to lead at Kapalua

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

KAPALUA, Hawaii (AP) — Fresh off his Presidents Cup debut, Joaquin Niemann of Chile brought fresh confidence and plenty of form to Maui by opening the year with a 7-under 66 for a one-shot lead over Justin Thomas after the opening round Thursday at the Sentry Tournament of Champions. Niemann is one of 15 first-time winners on the PGA Tour last year who are playing the rejuvenated Plantation Course at Kapalua for the first time. He knew his way around just fine in weather that might be as good as it gets all week.

He missed only one green and saved par. After a 30-foot birdie on No. 4, which he called his best shot of the day, his other six birdies were all from 10 feet or closer.

Thomas, who won at Kapalua three years ago, played bogey-free and made five birdies over his last eight holes for a 67.

He heard about the conditions in the forecast for the rest of the week, which include gusts in the 30 mph range, and wasn't bothered by that or his lack of birdies until the 11th hole onward.

"It's not like I was going to try

any harder," Thomas said. By the end of the round, it all felt easy. Thomas hit to 10 feet to a left pin on the tough 13th hole, added another birdie with a pitch he clipped perfectly up the slope to tap-in range on the par-5 15th and closed out his round with another perfectly judged pitch down the slope and grain to 4 feet on the par-5 closing hole.

Matt Kuchar and Rickie Fowler were at 68, with defending champion Xander Schauffele, Jon Rahm and Patrick Cantlay among those another shot back. Only nine players in the 34-man field of PGA Tour winners failed to shoot par or better. Niemann didn't win a match at Royal Melbourne — he went 0-3-1, twice facing two of the best U.S. partnerships — but thrived on the stage under International captain Ernie Els. "The Presidents Cup was one of my best experiences since I turned pro," he said. "I shared a lot of moments with the best players in the world. I got Ernie as a captain. That is just awesome. I think that week was really special for me. He told me that it's going to be really helpful for my career, for my future."

It appeared to help in the first round of the new year,



Joaquin Niemann walks off the 18th green after making birdie during first round of the Tournament of Champions golf event, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020, at Kapalua Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii.
Associated Press

and Niemann had plenty of company.

Thomas also thrived at Royal Melbourne, going 3-1-1. Then again, he's been playing well the last six months with only one finish out of the top 12 and none out of the top 20.

Key to his round was keeping bogeys off his card as much as the flurry of birdies at the end.

"It's kind of a mini-goal I have very round," he said of playing bogey-free. "I make enough birdies that if I minimized the mistakes, it's not that hard to have a chance to win the tournament."

Warm sunshine and moderate wind for these parts also helped. The wind was reasonable enough for the

tour to use all the new back tees that were part of the refinement project. Kapalua still provided its usual punishment for missed shots, however.

Dustin Johnson, a two-time winner at Kapalua, made six birdies and an eagle. That was barely enough to offset his double bogey on the par-5 ninth and four other bogeys, most of them because of wild tee shots. He had to reload on No. 9. He went into the waist-high grass left of the 12th, right of the 14th and had only seven pars. That added to a 72.

Cantlay had few complaints after a 69. His only mistake was a tee shot into the weeds right of the third hole for a double bogey.

He made a 30-foot eagle putt two holes later and didn't drop a shot the rest of the way.

Rahm came into the new year fresh off two wins and a runner-up finish before his wedding. He felt some rust, and he had some mild concerns after making the turn with a clunker into the sand on the par-3 11th that led to bogey and a bad drive on the 12th that was saved by the width of Kapalua's fairways.

"I probably had one of the worst professional shots I've hit in my life on 11, followed by a pretty bad drive on 12," Rahm said. "It was just a couple of bad shots. It's pure rust. The mind wasn't in the right place. Besides that, it was a great day." □

NFL to select greatest moments as part of 100th season

By **BARRY WILNER**
AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — From the Immaculate Reception, already voted the best play in NFL history, to the Dolphins' perfect season that has been selected as the all-time top team, the NFL is searching for its greatest moment.

As part of its celebration of the 100th season of play, the league is conducting balloting for its most iconic moment at NFL.com/greatestmoment and is encouraging fans to vote for one of the 32 team nominations. Voting will determine the top eight AFC and NFC moments until Jan. 9 at midnight EST.

That will leave 16 contenders that will be cut to eight across both conferences in voting from Jan. 9 until midnight EST on Jan. 16. Those eight moments will be reduced to four in balloting from Jan. 16 to midnight EST on Jan. 23. From

the final four, fans will choose the No. 1 overall moment in voting from Jan. 23 until noon on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 2.

Video clips and text describing each team's moment will be available when fans vote. The winner will be announced during the Super Bowl pregame show on Fox.

The 32 contenders:

- AFC
- Baltimore Ravens: The Mile High Miracle
- Buffalo Bills: The Comeback
- Cincinnati Bengals: Jennings Kickoff Return
- Cleveland Browns: 1964 NFL Championship
- Denver Broncos: Elway's Helicopter Run
- Houston Texans: Watt's Pick 6
- Indianapolis Colts: Jackson's Interception
- Jacksonville Jaguars: Taylor's 90-Yard Touchdown
- Kansas City Chiefs: 65 Toss Power Trap

- Los Angeles Chargers: Epic in Miami
- Miami Dolphins: The Perfect Season
- New England Patriots: 28-3
- New York Jets: Super Bowl 3
- Oakland Raiders: Marcus Allen's Reverse Run
- Pittsburgh Steelers: The Immaculate Reception
- Tennessee Titans: Music City Miracle
- NFC
- Arizona Cardinals: Fitz To The Post
- Atlanta Falcons: 2016 NFC Championship
- Carolina Panthers: Smith's Game-Winning TD
- Chicago Bears: Bears Super Bowl 20
- Dallas Cowboys: Hail Mary
- Detroit Lions: Thanksgiving In Detroit
- Green Bay Packers: The Ice Bowl
- Los Angeles Rams: The Tackle
- Minnesota Vikings: The Minneapolis Miracle
- New Orleans Saints: Porter's Pick-6
- New York Giants: The Helmet Catch. □

McCaffrey a double All-Pro pick; Gilmore, Thomas unanimous

By BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Christian McCaffrey's versatility and superb statistics helped him to a rare double: The Carolina Panthers running back has made The Associated Press NFL All-Pro Team at two positions.

McCaffrey rushed for 1,387 yards and 15 touchdowns while catching a phenomenal 116 passes for 1,005 yards and four TDs. He became the third player in NFL history to finish with 1,000 yards rushing and 1,000 yards receiving in the same season, joining Hall of Famer Marshall Faulk and Roger Craig, who is on the senior ballot for the hall this year.

That so impressed the 50 members of a nationwide media panel who regularly cover the NFL for McCaffrey to be voted the first-team running back and the top flex player. The flex position was created in 2016 to reward players who epitomize the way offense is now played in pro football. Not one fits that description better than McCaffrey, whose terrific season came for a 5-11 team. "It means a lot," says McCaffrey, a third-year pro. "It is a big honor and that is something that you don't work hard for it, but when it comes you are really grateful and appreciative."

McCaffrey's achievement was complemented by the unanimous selections of New Orleans receiver Michael Thomas and New England cornerback Stephon Gilmore. It's the second straight season both made the squad, Thomas doing it with an NFL-record 149 catches, Gilmore anchoring the league's top-ranked defense.

Ravens sensation Lamar Jackson, who in his second season led Baltimore to a league-best 14-2 mark, was chosen as quarterback. Jackson and McCaffrey were among 14 first-time All-Pros.

Rams safety Eric Weddle, who witnessed the jukes and jaunts of Jackson firsthand in a 45-6 Ravens romp.



Carolina Panthers running back Christian McCaffrey (22) runs as Carl Granderson (96) reaches for the tackle during the second half of an NFL football game in Charlotte, N.C., Sunday, Dec. 29, 2019.

Associated Press

"When you get on the field and you get to the speed of what they run, it's tough," says Weddle, a former All-Pro. "I mean, some of the plays I didn't know who had the ball because they run it so efficiently. (Jackson) is one of a kind; he's pretty special."

This special class includes several multiple All-Pros: Rams DT Aaron Donald and Seahawks LB Bobby Wagner, each for a fifth time; Cowboys right guard Zack Martin and Ravens kicker Justin Tucker for a fourth time.

Bears kick returner Cordarrelle Patterson made his third All-Pro roster, as did Eagles center Jason Kelce and Texans receiver DeAndre Hopkins.

All-Pros for the second time included Thomas, Gilmore, Cardinals edge rusher Chandler Jones, Steelers DT Cam Heyward, Patriots special teamer Matthew Slater, Colts left guard Quenton Nelson, and Ravens defensive back Marcus Peters, who shared that spot with the teammate Marlon Humphrey and the Chiefs' Tyrann Mathieu (second appearance).

Thomas, Gilmore, Nelson, Hopkins, Kelce, Martin, Donald, Wagner and Tuck-

er repeated from 2018.

The other newcomers were Humphrey; 49ers tight end George Kittle; Ravens left tackle Ronnie Stanley; Saints right tackle Ryan Ramczyk; Steelers edge rusher T.J. Watt; Saints linebacker Demario Davis; Vikings LB Eric Kendricks; Bills cornerback Tre'Davious White; safeties Jamal Adams of the Jets and Minkah Fitzpatrick of the Steelers; Titans punter Brett Kern; and Saints punt returner Deonte Harris, the only rookie on the team.

"When you got here and people start talking about All-Pro and that's the best of the best, you're like 'Pro Bowl is cool, but I need to get the best of the best,'" says Wagner, who led the NFL in tackles this season. "As you get older you kind of understand how hard these things are to get. And so you don't take any of them for granted and are very grateful for your health, grateful for your teammates. As you get older you reflect and you appreciate things differently that you might not have had when you were young."

Ramczyk once played Division III college ball. Now look at him. □

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Eichel converts penalty shot, Sabres beat Oilers 3-2

By The Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Jack Eichel scored on a penalty shot 1:09 into overtime and the Buffalo Sabres rallied from a two-goal deficit for a 3-2 win over the Edmonton Oilers on Thursday night. Eichel was awarded the penalty shot after Edmonton's Oscar Klefbom interfered with the Sabres' captain as he attempted to break in alone across the Oilers' blue line. Eichel couldn't get a shot off on the delayed penalty, and Oilers goalie Mike Smith made an acrobatic save to prevent Sam Reinhart from scoring from the lower right circle.

Eichel then scored when he drove in on net from the left wing and snapped a shot inside the far post.

Reinhart and Curtis Lazar also scored for Buffalo, and Linus Ullmark stopped 25 shots.

Riley Sheahan and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins scored for the Oilers. Smith stopped 23 shots and dropped to 0-4-1 in his past seven appearances.

The Sabres snapped a four-game skid and improved to 2-6-1 in their past nine.

SHARKS 3, PENGUINS 2, OT
PITTSBURGH (AP) — Brent Burns' power-play goal just more than two minutes into overtime gave San Jose a win over Pittsburgh.

Burns picked up his seventh goal of the season when his slap shot from high in the slot beat Tristan Jarry 2:02 into the extra period to give the Sharks only their third win in 14 games. Joe Thornton got the primary assist to move past Adam Oates for seventh place with 1,080 career assists.

Tomas Hertl scored his 15th goal for the Sharks and Logan Couture added his 13th as San Jose improved to 3-5-1 under interim coach Bob Boughner. Aaron Dell stopped 36 shots.

Patric Hornqvist scored twice for Pittsburgh, which lost for just the second time in nine games. Jarry finished with 28 saves but the Penguins couldn't kill off an overtime penalty by defenseman Kris Letang, who was sent off for tripping 46

seconds in.

BLUE JACKETS 2, BRUINS 1, OT

BOSTON (AP) — Pierre-Luc Dubois scored 52 seconds into overtime, Elvis Merzlikins stopped 25 shots and Columbus beat Boston.



Buffalo Sabres forward Jack Eichel (9) skates during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the Edmonton Oilers, Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020, in Buffalo, N.Y.

Associated Press

Sonny Milano also scored for the Blue Jackets, tying the game two minutes into the third period. Dubois won it by finishing off a 2-on-1 rush with Seth Jones. David Pastrnak scored his 30th goal of the season for Boston, and Tuukka Rask made 31 saves as the Bruins lost in overtime or a shootout for the third time in four games.

Columbus seemed to score in the first 17 seconds when Gustav Nyquist beat Rask, but the replay showed goaltender interference and the goal was waved off. Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella, who was fined \$20,000 by the NHL for criticizing the officials after Sunday's loss to the Chicago Blackhawks, held his temper.

LIGHTNING 2, CANADIENS 1
MONTREAL (AP) — Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 38 shots and Tampa Bay extended its winning streak to five games with a win over Montreal.

Anthony Cirelli and Nikita Kucherov scored for the Lightning (22-13-4). Vasilevskiy improved to 10-1-2

all-time against Montreal. Defenseman Jeff Petry scored for the Canadiens (18-17-6), who have lost four games in a row. Carey Price made 21 saves in Montreal's first home game after a seven-game trip.

ons apart in the final minute of the second period to put the game out of reach. Jonathan Huberdeau added an empty-net goal in the third to round out the scoring for Florida.

Tyler Ennis and Chris Tierney

Christian Dvorak triggered a three-goal third period by scoring in the opening minute, Antti Raanta stopped 27 shots and Arizona rallied past Anaheim.

Lawson Crouse scored in the first period, but Arizona went into the third trailing 2-1. The Coyotes came out of the locker room buzzing to start the third period and cashed in on Dvorak's goal. Brad Richardson followed with his second goal and Carl Soderberg had his 12th a minute later.

Jakob Silfverberg scored his 15th goal of the season and Max Jones also scored for the Ducks, who have lost six of eight. John Gibson gave up four goals for the second straight game.

FLAMES 4, RANGERS 3

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Johnny Gaudreau opened the scoring and then set up the winning goal midway through the second period as Calgary snapped a five-game losing streak at home.

Less than three minutes after New York tied it 3-all, Sean Monahan gave the Flames their third lead at 8:22 of the second when he neatly finished off a pretty tic-tac-toe passing sequence.

Mikael Backlund and Derek Ryan also scored for Calgary (21-17-5). Cam Talbot made 24 saves to beat his former team.

New York fell to 1-2-0 on a four-game road trip that wraps up Saturday night in Vancouver.

AVALANCHE 7, BLUES 3

DENVER (AP) — Nazem Kadri scored twice, Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and three assists, and Colorado snapped a four-game home losing streak with a win over St. Louis.

Rookie defenseman Cale Makar added a power-play goal and an assist for the Avalanche, who also ended a six-game losing streak to the Blues, including two losses earlier this season in St. Louis. Mikko Rantanen J.T. Compher also had power-play goals, and Joonas Donskoi had the other goal for the Avalanche. Samuel Girard finished with four assists. □

scored in the first period to give Ottawa (16-20-5) a 2-1 lead heading into the first break. Connor Brown scored in the third. Craig Anderson stopped 25 shots for the Senators.

MAPLE LEAFS 6, JETS 3

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (AP) — William Nylander had two goals and an assist and Toronto extended its points streak to nine games with a win over Winnipeg.

Kasperii Kapanen had a goal and assist, and Travis Dermott, Pierre Engvall and Mitch Marner also scored for the Leafs, who are 8-0-1 during their streak. Frederik Andersen stopped 45 shots. Kyle Connor and Mark Scheifele each had a goal and an assist for Winnipeg, and Patrik Laine also scored. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 12 of 17 shots for the Jets before being replaced by Laurent Brossoit, who made 10 saves on 11 shots in the third period.

The Jets have one win in their last five games (1-3-1) and have lost five straight (0-4-1) at home.

COYOTES 4, DUCKS 2

GLENDAL, Ariz. (AP) —

Tampa Bay improved to 15-2-0 against Atlantic-division opponents this season. All the scoring came in the first period.

DEVILS 2, ISLANDERS 1

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (AP) — Nico Hischier scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period, Mackenzie Blackwood stopped 29 shots, and New Jersey beat the Islanders.

Brock Nelson scored for New York and Semyon Varlamov made 29 saves as the Islanders lost their fourth straight at Nassau Coliseum.

Hischier extended his point streak to three games when he scored the go-ahead goal at 1:09 of the third.

PANTHERS 6, SENATORS 3

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Frank Vatrano scored the deciding goal as part of Florida's four-goal outburst in the second period.

Evgenii Dadonov scored his second power-play goal of the game to tie it at 2-all for Florida (21-14-5), and 89 seconds later Noel Acciari gave the Panthers the lead. Vatrano and Colton Sceviour scored 44 sec-



In this Oct. 25, 2019, file photo, Houston Astros relief pitcher Will Harris throws against the Washington Nationals during the seventh inning of Game 3 of the baseball World Series, in Washington.

Associated Press

Former Astro Will Harris joins Nats after losing Game 7

By JAKE SEINER
AP Sports Writer

Relief pitcher Will Harris is joining the Washington Nationals after they beat him and the Houston Astros in Game 7 of the World Series.

Harris and the Nationals have agreed to a \$24 million, three-year contract, the team announced Friday. The 35-year-old right-hander dominated with Houston for much of the postseason, starting October with nine consecutive scoreless innings. The Nationals finally got to him late in the World Series, and Harris allowed Howie Kendrick's go-ahead home run in Game 7.

Washington went on to win its first World Series. Harris was stuck with the loss. "There's no bitterness or anything like that from my end other than: Would I have liked it to go a different way? I mean, of course," Harris said. "But there's a lot of moments in my career I wish had gone a different way."

Harris acknowledged feeling uneasy when the Nationals first approached him.

"That's the first Game 7 World Series homer I've ever given up and I plan

on it being the last," he said. "So didn't really know how to feel about it and how I felt about the Nationals.

"It didn't take me very long," he added. "It took me a little while, thinking about it. I was like, 'Look, man, there's a lot of baseball left to play.' And I'm looking forward to doing it in an organization that I feel really comfortable being a part of."

The right-handed Harris had a 1.50 ERA in 68 games for the Astros last season. He had been with Houston since 2015 and was an All-Star in 2016. Harris will try to bolster a bullpen that was among the worst in baseball last season. Nationals relievers blew 29 saves and had a 5.68 ERA, both worst in the NL. Harris is likely to slot behind closer Sean Doolittle as the team's top setup man.

Harris filled a number of roles during his time in Houston, including as a specialist against left-handed hitters — unusual for a right-handed pitcher, but a crucial strength as Major League Baseball adopts a three-batter minimum for pitchers heading into the 2020 season. □



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady passes against the Buffalo Bills in the first half of an NFL football game, Saturday, Dec. 21, 2019, in Foxborough, Mass.

Associated Press

Titans-Patriots get prime-time spotlight for wild-card games

By BARRY WILNER
AP Pro Football Writer

The Patriots have been compared to a sporting dynasty and to Palpatine's Evil Empire. Regardless of which is true, there's no denying that New England enters these playoffs more vulnerable than in quite a few years.

One thing we've learned since Tom Brady went from 199th draft pick to dominant NFL figure is not to dismiss him and his Patriots. Sure, they have been ultrasloppy in the second half of the schedule, and blowing a bye with a home loss to the Dolphins not only was stunning, it was inexcusable.

Not that the Patriots are looking backward. They never do. The big difference in Tennessee is at quarterback, where Ryan Tannehill has been dynamic and a winner since taking over for Marcus Mariota. Derrick Henry led the league in rushing and is a threat inside or outside. The defense is solid enough, though it doesn't measure up to New England's league leaders.

Mike Vrabel has the look of a coach on the rise, as does his team. No. 12 (AP Pro32) Tennessee is a 4 1/2-point underdog for Saturday night at No. 7 New England.

Pro Picks just can't go against the Brady Bunch in this one, as tempting as it might be.

PATRIOTS, 23-17

No. 9 Buffalo (plus 3) at No. 10 Houston, Saturday

Forget that the Bills lost their last two games. They tested New England to the limit in their 15th game, then had nothing on the line in the finale with the Jets.

This is a much better Buffalo squad than what went to the playoffs two years ago to break that endless postseason drought.

"We're legit," linebacker Lorenzo Alexander says.

We'll find out how legit in the opener of the wild-card round. Houston tends to disappoint once it gets into the postseason: The Texans are 3-5 in the playoffs and never have reached a conference title game.

UPSET SPECIAL: BILLS 23-16
No. 8 Minnesota (plus 7 1/2) at No. 2 New Orleans, Sunday

What craziness will strike the Saints in these playoffs to keep them from the Super Bowl? Already, at 13-3, they could only manage a wild card. In the AFC, they would have been the No. 2 seed. Nothing has been easy in the Big Easy for the Saints in January. Two years ago, they fell victim to some terrible defending in the secondary for

the "Minneapolis Miracle." Last year, it was terrible officiating that cost them a trip to the big game. But New Orleans also has been on a nice run lately, and the same can't be said for inconsistent Minnesota. "Overall the team kind of heads into this postseason with some confidence based on how we've been playing," Saints coach Sean Payton said. "And yet I think they understand the type of tournament this is." They know better than anyone that it is a crapshoot.

BEST BET: SAINTS, 30-17
No. 6 Seattle (minus 1 1/2) at No. 11 Philadelphia, Sunday

Maybe the two most resilient teams in the league meet at the Linc. Unfortunately, one of their main links is injuries — both have been decimated by them. Somehow, the Eagles ran off four straight victories to conclude the schedule and steal the NFC East despite playing with much of the junior varsity on the field. King-size kudos to coach Doug Pederson and his staff for not only finding the right subs, but getting them ready to play key roles in the stretch drive. And the same praise for Carson Wentz, who has validated himself as a franchise quarterback during this stretch. □

Kyrgios serves up funds for Australia at debut of ATP Cup

By **JOHN PYE**
AP Sports Writer

BRISBANE, Australia (AP)

— Nick Kyrgios served 20 aces in a win that cost him \$4,000 in local currency and helped set up Australia's opening ATP Cup win over Germany.

It was all for a cause. Kyrgios, so often considered the bad boy of tennis for his emotional behavior and outbursts, promised to donate 200 Australian dollars (\$140) for every ace he serves this month to go toward the recovery effort from the wildfires that have devastated parts of Australia, leaving at least 19 people dead and 1,400 homes destroyed.

He opened and closed his 6-4, 7-6 (4) win over Jan-Lennard Struff on Friday in Brisbane with booming, high-value serves — including a second-service ace down the middle to close it out.

Alex De Minaur followed that up with an upset over No. 7-ranked Alexander Zverev, trailing a set and a break before rallying to win 4-6, 7-6 (3), 6-2 on Pat Rafter Arena. Australia also won the doubles to clinch a 3-0 sweep of Germany. Kyrgios devised the cash for aces idea earlier in the week, and inspired other fundraising efforts from other players and from organizers of the ATP Cup

and the Australian Open. He said he was lifted by the crowd, and motivated by the plight of people struggling in parts of the country impacted by the fires, including his hometown of Canberra. A tournament had to be relocated from the Australian capital to Victoria state earlier Friday because of poor air quality related to the proximity of the fires.

"It's tough," Kyrgios said, choking back tears and wiping his face with his towel in an on-court interview. "(The money raised) is going to the families, fire fighters, animals, everyone who is losing homes, losing family - it's a real thing. It's bigger than tennis, you know. "It's tough to go out there and concentrate on tennis, to be honest. Every ace I was hitting that's all I was thinking about. Every time I stepped up to the line that's all I was thinking about."

Canada registered the first victory of the new international team tournament, and the United States went down in the first major upset despite being one point from clinching a win over Norway. The 24-team tournament kicked off the men's tennis season for 2020, with matches Friday in Brisbane and Sydney on Australia's east coast and Perth in Western Australia state. The Canadians swept



Nick Kyrgios of Australia reacts after winning his match against Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany at the ATP Cup tennis tournament in Brisbane, Australia, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

Greece 3-0, with Denis Shapovalov holding off No. 6-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-6 (6), 7-6 (4) after 19-year-old Felix Auger-Aliassime beat Michail Pervolarakis in the first singles victory of the tournament. They combined to win the doubles. The No. 15-ranked Shapovalov now has a 3-1 lead in career meetings over ATP Finals champion Tsitsipas, who was unable to convert his break-point chances in the seventh and 11th games of the second set and then had a double-fault on match point.

"He had an unbelievable end to the season and he's definitely one of the top players in the world right now," Shapovalov said. "So to beat a guy like this first match of the year, it's really special for me."

In Perth, Russia beat Italy 3-0 after Norway rallied to edge the United States in Group D. Taylor Fritz beat Viktor Durasovic 6-2, 6-2 to give the Americans the lead and John Isner had two match points in the second-set tiebreaker of the second singles match before Casper Ruud rallied to win 6-7 (3), 7-6 (10), 7-5 to level it. Ruud combined with Durasovic to beat Rajeev Ram and Austin Krajicek 4-6, 6-3, 10-5 to seal Norway's 2-1 win.

"What I need to do is really just put this match behind me as best as I can, because at times it wasn't pretty out there," Isner said. "So hopefully I can fix some things and try to play a little bit better on Sunday."

Fifth-ranked Daniil Medvedev gave Russia an unbeatable 2-0 lead against Italy when he beat Fabio

Fognini 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 in the second singles match.

In Sydney, Belgium beat Moldova 3-0, with Steve Darcis holding off Alexander Cozbinov 6-4, 6-7 (4), 7-5 and David Goffin beating Radu Albot 6-4, 6-1. The Moldova team got a formal apology from tournament organizers after the wrong national anthem was played before the match. And just after 2:45 a.m. local time, Bulgaria finally beat Britain 2-1 when Grigor Dimitrov and No. 477-ranked Alexander Lazarov saved two match points before finishing off a 7-6 (5), 6-7 (2), 11-9 win over Jamie Murray and Joe Salisbury in the deciding doubles match. Dimitrov had earlier beaten Dan Evans 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 in the second singles match to pull Bulgaria level at 1-1. □



Philadelphia 76ers guard Ben Simmons (25) and Orlando Magic forward Jonathan Isaac (1) fight for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Orlando, Fla., Friday, Dec. 27, 2019.

Associated Press

Magic say Jonathan Isaac out 2 months, possibly more

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The Orlando Magic are bracing to be without forward Jonathan Isaac for at least two months and possibly more, after tests Thursday showed an injury to the posterior lateral corner of his left knee as well as a bone bruise.

The Magic said Isaac — who is off to the best statistical start of his career, particularly on the defensive end — will be out indefinitely, won't be re-evaluated for at least eight weeks and

that surgery may still be an option.

"While this certainly is disappointing news, there was no damage to his ACL, MCL and PCL ligaments," Magic President of Basketball Operations Jeff Weltman said.

"All signs point to a complete recovery and this should not impact his future growth."

Isaac has started 32 of Orlando's 34 games this season and was having the

best year of his three-year career — his per-game averages of 12.0 points, 6.9 rebounds, 2.4 blocks, 1.6 steals and 1.4 assists are all career-bests.

He is one of only two players averaging more than 2.0 steals and 1.0 blocks entering Thursday's games. The other is Anthony Davis of the Los Angeles Lakers. Isaac was hurt in the first quarter of Orlando's win over Washington on Wednesday. □

Kyle Busch brings the Rowdy show to the Rolex 24 at Daytona

By JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer
DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP)

— Fresh from a holiday trip to the Bahamas, NASCAR's newest two-time champion raced back to the track to open the new year.

Kyle Busch stepped out of his comfort zone at Daytona International Speedway on Friday, pulling on a white helmet adorned with his nickname "Rowdy" and climbing into a Lexus RC-F to test for the upcoming Rolex 24 at Daytona. The prestigious sports car race always features some of the top talent in the world, and Busch just might be this year's main attraction.

Last year's running of the twice-round-the-clock endurance race featured two-time Formula One champion Fernando Alonso and former CART champion Alex Zanardi, who raced for BMW without his prosthetic legs and relying on a specially built steering wheel to control the car. Alonso and Zanardi stole the spotlight from a stacked field that includes champions from racing series all over the world.

This year, the group includes Busch, who wrapped up his second NASCAR title less than six weeks ago.

He's driving for Aim Vasser Sullivan in the stacked GTD class — at 18 entries that class has the most in the field — and drew the biggest crowds Friday as he prepped for his first stint in the car. Busch had one day of simulator work with Rolex teammate Jack Hawksworth before the test and recognized quickly what he needs to work on to be ready for the Jan. 25 race.

"I've got my NASCAR driving techniques just embedded in my brain and I've got to get rid of those a little bit more and get more accustomed to what this car can take and what the driving techniques are," he said.

Because the Vasser Sullivan team races in a lower class, Busch will not be in contention for the overall victory. He will also be mired in traffic, potentially at night, stuck behind slower cars pi-



Kyle Busch heads to his garage during testing for the upcoming Rolex 24 hour auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

loted by drivers with far less experience. Busch brought his regular spotter from NASCAR to assist, but can't realistically gauge the difficulties he may face until race time.

For now, he has to figure out the anti-lock braking system, which is foreign to his regular car.

"I am used to our big, heavy stock cars where you have to start the slow down process way early, and the braking zone is forever and by the time you turn in you've got to be off the brakes, otherwise the inside wheels will lock up," Busch said. "Completely different techniques with these cars. You can just drive the snot out of them, you can just throw it off the corner as far as you feel like you can get in there and stomp the pedal as hard as you think your leg will allow you to do it."

Even out of his element, in a new car and a different series, Busch remained both demanding and exact in how he likes his car to feel. During an early debrief, he "suggested we get a little softer and they said 'We're as soft as we can get,' and I said 'Well, that ain't soft enough.'"

His debut in the Rolex, the unofficial opener of

the racing season, will be closely watched but this race is rich in story lines.

Wayne Taylor Racing is the defending race winning team but returned only two members (Renger van der Zande and Kamui Kobayashi) to its four-man roster.

Alonso won't be back amid speculation he will return to the Indianapolis 500 this year and has been replaced by five-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon. Dixon became available when Chip Ganassi shut down his sports car team at the end of last season because Ford ended its program.

Taylor also hired Ryan Briscoe, a former Rolex winner for Ganassi, to drive for the team full-time as a replacement for Taylor's son, who earned a factory-backed job with Corvette Racing this season. The decision to leave his father was difficult for Jordan Taylor, but an opportunity he could not turn down.

The Taylor team in its Cadillac will compete for the overall win against Mazda Team Joest, which this week announced former Indianapolis 500 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay will be part of the lineup, and Acura Team Penske, which

is seeking its first Rolex victory in three tries since Rog-

er Penske returned to the series. Juan Pablo Montoya and Dane Cameron teamed to give Penske the overall IMSA championship this past year, and they've got reigning Indy 500 winner Simon Pagnaud on their team this year. The second Penske car of Helio Castroneves and Ricky Taylor will be joined by Alexander Rossi, another Indy 500 winner.

"When you drive for Roger, the goal is to win every race, every time out," Montoya said. "So the pressure is there."

The event also features 18-year-old Hailee Deegan, a rising star in motorsports recently named a development driver with Ford Performance. She will run select sports car events in the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge this season and turned her first laps with teammate Chase Briscoe on Friday. □

Houston Hogg, helped integrate SEC at Kentucky, dies at 71



In this Sept. 22, 2016, file photo, from left, Mel Page, representing his brother Greg Page; Nate Northington; Wilbur Hackett; and Houston Hogg pose after statues of them were unveiled at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — Houston Hogg, one of four African-American football players at Kentucky who helped break the Southeastern Conference color line in the late 1960s, has died. He was 71.

The school announced Friday that Hogg died in Owensboro, Kentucky. The former Wildcats running back and defensive back entered Kentucky in 1967, a year after Nate

Northington and Greg Page arrived in Lexington to become the first black players to enroll at an SEC school. Hogg played freshman football that season, when Northington made his historic varsity debut for the Wildcats on Sept. 23, 1967, and played his first SEC game a week later against Mississippi. Northington's SEC debut came a day after Page died from a neck injury sustained in practice that summer. □

Co-creator defends suspected UAE spying app called ToTok

By JON GAMBRELL

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — If the popular ToTok video and voice calling app is a spying tool of the United Arab Emirates, that's news to its co-creator.

Giacomo Ziani defended his work in an interview with The Associated Press and said he had no knowledge that people and companies linked to the project had ties to the country's intelligence apparatus, despite a recent report in The New York Times.

Millions downloaded the ToTok app during the several months it was available in the Apple and Google stores. Its surge in popularity was likely driven by the fact that it allowed users to make internet calls that have long been banned in the UAE, a U.S.-allied nation where the largest city is Dubai.

The ban means Apple iPhones and computers sold in the UAE do not carry Apple's FaceTime calling app. Calls on Skype, WhatsApp and other similar programs do not work.

Ziani, a 32-year-old native of Venice, Italy, said ToTok won rapid approval from UAE telecommunications regulators, something long sought by established competitors that remain banned. He attributed that decision to the monopoly on the telecom market held by two companies that are majority-owned by the government. ToTok's small market share, he said, would not cut as deeply into their business as major firms if allowed access.

In this nation of 9.4 million people where all but a sliver of the population comes from another country, ToTok represented what appeared to be the first government-blessed app that would allow them to connect freely to loved ones back home. That drew everyone from laborers to diplomatic staffers to download it amid a publicity campaign by state-linked and government-supporting media in the Emirates.

Ziani denied that the com-



In this Tuesday, Dec. 31, 2019 photo, Giacomo Ziani, the co-founder of the app ToTok, speaks to The Associated Press in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

pany collected conversation data, saying the software demanded the same access to devices as other common communication apps. Emirati authorities insisted that they "prohibit any kind of data breach and unlawful interception." But this federation of seven sheikhdoms ruled by hereditary leaders already conducts mass surveillance and has been internationally criticized for targeting activists, journalists and others. Ziani repeatedly said he knew nothing about that, nor had any knowledge that a firm invested in ToTok included staff with ties to an Emirati security firm scrutinized abroad for hiring former CIA and National Security Agency staffers. He also said he did not know about alleged ties linking companies involved with ToTok to Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Emirates' national security adviser.

"I was not aware, and I'm even not aware now of who was who, who was doing what in the past," Ziani said.

By installing the app, users agreed to allow access to their mobile device's microphone, pictures, location information and other data.

"By using this app, you're

allowing your life to be opened up to the whims of national security as seen by the UAE government," said Bill Marczak, a computer science researcher at the University of California, Berkley, who has studied ToTok and other suspected Emirati spying operations. "In this case, you're essentially having people install the spyware themselves as opposed to hacking into the phone."

An American diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters, said local embassy and consular staff received orders to remove the app from all U.S. government devices. That was only after the Times, citing anonymous U.S. officials, described the app as a "spying tool" of the Emirati government.

Ziani alleged, without providing evidence, that criticism of ToTok came more from professional jealousy and U.S.-China trade tensions than security concerns.

ToTok described itself on Apple as coming from developer Breej Holding Ltd. and on Google as being from ToTok Pte., a Singapore-based firm.

Both ToTok and Breej Holding Ltd. had been registered in a publicly acces-

sible online database of companies operating out of the Abu Dhabi Global Market, an economic free zone set up in the Emirati capital. After suspicions emerged about ToTok, records of the two firms no longer appeared online.

Following an inquiry about the firms from an AP journalist, their information reappeared Tuesday night in the database. Market spokeswoman Joan Lew blamed a "data migration" problem for their disappearance.

Information from that database shows ToTok's sole registered shareholder as Group 42, a new Abu Dhabi firm that describes itself as an artificial intelligence and cloud-computing company. Ziani said ToTok has another substantial investor he declined to identify.

Also known as G42, the company's CEO is Peng Xiao, who for years ran Pegasus, a subsidiary of DarkMatter, an Emirati security firm under scrutiny for hiring former CIA and NSA staffers, as well as others from Israel.

"G42 has no connection to DarkMatter, whatsoever," the company told AP in a statement. It did not respond to further queries. G42's sole director listed in

Abu Dhabi Global Market filings is Hamad Khalfan al-Shamsi, whom Marczak identified as the public relations manager of the office of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Sheikh Tahnoun is a brother to Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the powerful crown prince of Abu Dhabi who has run the country from day-to-day since its president, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, suffered a stroke in January 2014.

Sheikh Tahnoun has served as the UAE's national security adviser since 2016. The sheikh's adopted son, Hassan al-Rumaithi, is the sole director of Breej Holding Ltd., Marczak said, citing market filings.

Similarly, an executive at Sheikh Tahnoun's company Royal Group, Osama al-Ahdali, is the sole director of ToTok Technology Ltd., Marczak said.

Royal Group did not respond to a request for comment, nor did Emirati officials, Apple and Google.

For now, Ziani said he is focused on getting ToTok back into the Apple and Google app stores. He mentioned plans to have ToTok become like China's all-encompassing app WeChat, handling payments, social media posts and other high-frequency activities. G42 appears to already have filed paperwork for a possible payment company in Abu Dhabi.

That could create an Emirati version of WeChat, a service used by more than 1 billion people in which Chinese government officials routinely censor posts. Dissidents suspect it of allowing surveillance.

Ziani insisted a former NSA hacker named Patrick Wardle, who analyzed ToTok, said the app "simply does what it claims to do."

However, Ziani ignored the next sentence in Wardle's analysis, which described "the genius of the whole mass surveillance operation" the app could represent by offering "in-depth insight" into "a large percentage of the country's population." □

Associated Press

Oil prices surge, stocks slip after US kills Iranian general

By ALEX VEIGA

Associated Press

Stocks fell on Wall Street in afternoon trading Friday and oil prices surged after U.S. forces in Iraq killed a top Iranian general.

Financial stocks were among the biggest decliners as investors bought up U.S. government bonds, sending their yields lower. Technology stocks, health care companies and airlines also took heavy losses as the market pulled back from record highs.

Several energy stocks rose as the price of U.S. oil headed higher. Defense contractors also notched gains.

Benchmark U.S. crude was up \$1.50, or 2.5%, to \$62.69 per barrel. It had been up 3.6% earlier in the day. Brent crude, used to price international oils, moved \$2.02 higher to \$68.27 per barrel.

The selling followed a broad decline in markets overseas following news that Gen. Qassem Soleimani, head of



In this Dec. 11, 2019, file photo trader Michael Urkonis, left, and specialist Anthony Matesic work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Associated Press

Iran's elite Quds Force, was killed in an air attack at the Baghdad international airport early Friday.

President Donald Trump said the attack was ordered because Soleimani

was plotting to kill many Americans. The strike marks a major escalation in the conflict between Washington and Iran, as Iran vowed "harsh retaliation" for the killing of the senior military

leader.

The price of gold, which investors buy in times of uncertainty as a safe haven of value, was up 1.5% at \$1,551 per ounce.

The sell-off erased most of

the benchmark S&P 500 index's gains for the week.

KEEPING SCORE: The S&P 500 was down 0.4% as of 1:11 p.m. Eastern time. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 160 points, or 0.6%, to 28,708. The index briefly dropped 368 points.

The Nasdaq dropped 0.4% and the Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks gave up 0.2%.

BOND YIELDS: Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 1.80% from 1.88% late Thursday, a big move.

Lower bond yields bring down the interest rates that banks charge for mortgages and other consumer loans, making them less profitable. That prompted a sell-off in bank shares. JPMorgan slid 0.7%, Bank of America dropped 1.6% and Citigroup lost 1%.

TURBULENCE: Airlines slumped as oil prices rose. American Airlines Group dropped 3.7%, United Airlines Holdings slid 2% and Delta Air Lines lost 1.9%. □

Federal Reserve last month saw a declining risk of recession

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve's policy-making committee saw much less risk of recession at its meeting last month, when it kept interest rates steady after three straight cuts and signaled that it expected to keep low rates unchanged through this year.

Minutes of the December meeting, released Friday, showed that Fed officials supported keeping rates in a low range of 1.5% to 1.75% to cushion the U.S. economy from slow global growth and the Trump administration's trade tensions. Officials were also concerned that inflation still hadn't reached the Fed's target level of 2%.

Still, many Fed policymakers said at the Dec. 10-11 meeting that the risks of a U.S.-China trade war had diminished along with the probability of a disruptive Brexit. The meeting occurred two days before



In this Dec. 11, 2019, file photo Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell arrives to speak at a news conference after the Federal Open Market Committee meeting in Washington.

Associated Press

the Trump administration and Beijing reached a preliminary trade deal, though press reports had already suggested that an agreement was near.

At their meeting last month, Fed officials noted that the

U.S. economy was "showing resilience" despite the trade fights and a weak global economy, the minutes said. A rise in long-term rates also "suggested that the likelihood of a recession occurring over the medium

term had fallen noticeably in recent months."

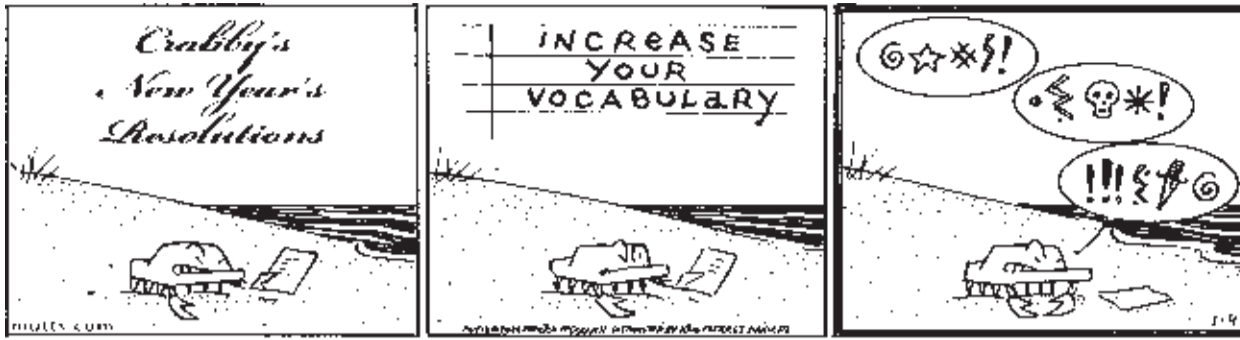
Since last month's meeting, though, tensions have escalated in the Middle East as the United States has struck Iranian forces in Iraq. On Friday, stocks sank

on Wall Street and oil prices jumped after U.S. forces in Iraq killed a top Iranian general.

Yet many analysts say higher oil prices could potentially benefit the U.S. economy because of the sharp increase in the past decade in U.S. oil production. Higher oil prices encourage energy companies to invest in more drilling wells, which boosts demand for steel pipe and other equipment from U.S. factories, and creates jobs. Those trends increasingly offset the drag on consumer spending exerted by higher gas prices. Though the Fed's policy-making committee voted unanimously last month in favor of keeping rates unchanged, several members voiced concerns about the long-term impact of very low rates.

Keeping rates so low could fuel excessive risk-taking on Wall Street, a few participants warned, which could lead to dangerous asset bubbles. □

Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



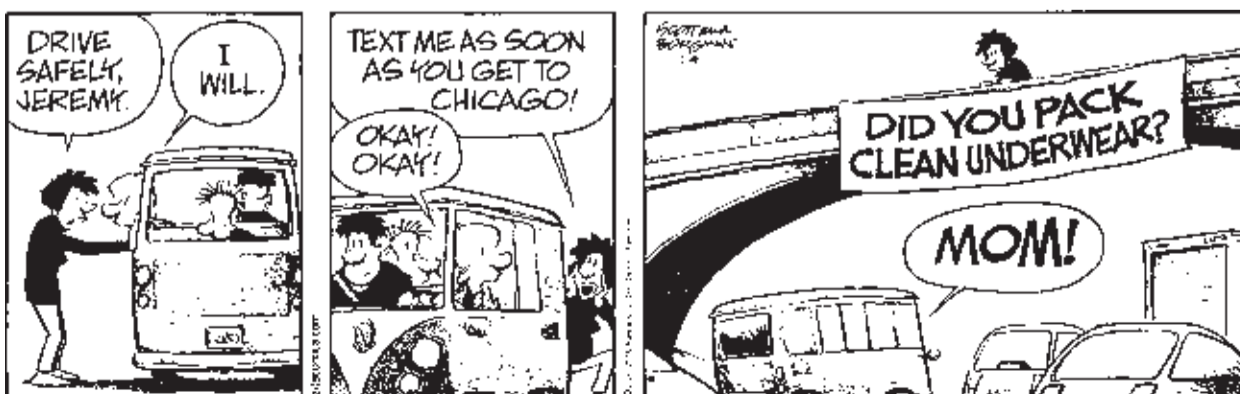
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

4	2			5	9
5		2	4	8	
1	5		3	2	
	3			8	
6	1		8	4	
			3		
3	6		9	5	
7	9			2	6

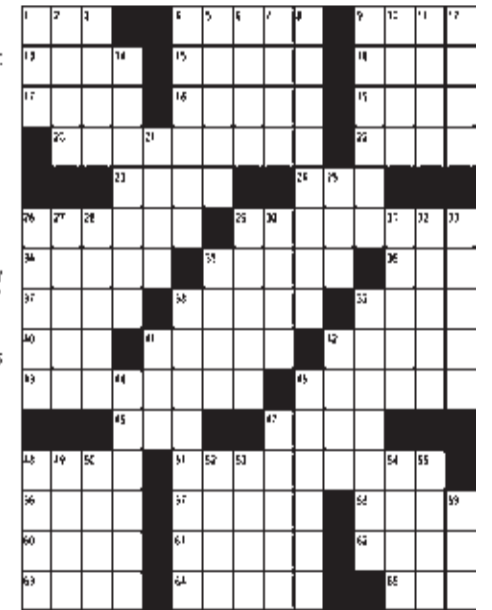
Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

8	9	4	6	2	3	5	1	7
1	3	7	5	4	8	6	9	2
5	2	6	7	1	9	8	3	4
4	8	9	2	6	7	3	5	1
7	6	5	1	3	4	9	2	8
2	1	3	9	8	5	4	7	6
3	7	2	8	5	6	1	4	9
6	4	1	3	9	2	7	8	5
9	5	8	4	7	1	2	6	3

- ACROSS
- 1 Conductor
 - 4 Follow as a result of
 - 9 Use a severe
 - 13 Rich soil
 - 15 For, despite
 - 16 Quailed
 - 17 Actress Turner
 - 18 Wild Australian dog
 - 19 Chicken party
 - 20 Precursor
 - 22 Bladed tool
 - 23 down; requires
 - 24 Delicate
 - 25 Destructive insects
 - 29 Most highly seasoned
 - 34 Seawater
 - 35 Texas or Idaho
 - 36 Complex
 - 37 Plover's goal
 - 38 Nuts
 - 39 processor; computer job
 - 40 Family card game
 - 41 out; escapes in a parachute
 - 42 Furniture wood
 - 43 Awful
 - 45 NASCAR drivers
 - 46 Actor Robinson's initials
 - 47 Condo
 - 48 Part of the alphabet
 - 51 Attacker
 - 56 Steel's main component
 - 57 Barbes & Cabbage Patch Kids
 - 58 Window; James Stewart's trailer
 - 60 Ready to be sicked
 - 61 Vari'n gamish
 - 62 Apiece
 - 63 Bar fast
 - 64 On the in a helpless position
 - 65 Fight result; for sport



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

Friday's Puzzle Solved

SOS	AORTA	ADAM
MUCH	CRITER	TUBA
ARCH	GALAMITOUS	
PEA	LULLS	RESTS
S	WISS	KIN
SOIREE	WISDOM	
AVOID	LARCH	VAN
RENT	KODAK	GENE
INA	SNOOP	DORIS
SLALOM	KOALAS	
	MAT	PINTO
OFTEN	CRANE	OFA
WRONGDOING	SKID	
NEED	ANGEL	PETS
SEES	MESSY	YDS

- DOWN
- 1 Burbling wing often
 - 2 Flood survivor
 - 3 Carvey or DeLany
 - 4 Singer; Gorme & others
 - 5 German ret.Usa's
 - 6 Warbled
 - 7 Egg on
 - 8 Hugeness
 - 9 African expedition
 - 10 Mountain goat
 - 11 Escape
 - 12 Kennedy & Cruz
 - 14 Miami team
 - 21 ones time; waf
 - 25 Part of a backpack
 - 26 Approximately
 - 27 Dried fruit
 - 28 miss; haphazard
 - 29 Striped
 - 30 Cookware items
 - 31 Escape detection by
 - 32 Stringed instrument
 - 33 In weeping
 - 35 Dri
 - 38 retriever; friendly dog
 - 39 Announce; make crown
 - 41 Sky Country; nickname for Montana
 - 42 off; cancel
 - 44 n. brought under control
 - 45 Elevates
 - 47 Bsect
 - 48 Evergreens
 - 49 Tight rod
 - 50 Remain opt; mshc
 - 52 Fly alone
 - 53 Undergarment
 - 54 as a pin
 - 55 Carpet nail
 - 59 Scrogy letter

Christmas miracle for Florida dog whose heart stopped

Associated Press
GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — A Florida man was hoping for a Christmas miracle when his dog was attacked by another animal, and a team of veterinarians provided it.

The heart of Gerald Ford's 1-year-old French bulldog Neo stopped beating following the attack on Christmas Eve. In a rare occurrence, veterinarians at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine were able to revive Neo. Research suggests that animals whose hearts have given out live full, healthy lives only 5% percent of the time.

"Typically when an animal passes and comes back, they have to be on a mechanical ventilator, a breathing machine," Dr. Bobbi Conner, a University of Florida professor and vet specializing in emergency medicine told The Gainesville Sun.

Ford had let Neo outside on Christmas Eve to do his business on his 12-acre property in White Springs,



In this Thursday, Jan. 2, 2020 photo, Gerald Ford embraces his dog Neo, a French bulldog, at the Small Animal Hospital in Gainesville, Fla.

Associated Press

Florida, a rural area between Jacksonville and Tallahassee.

Ford said he found it odd when Neo didn't come back, but he left the front door to his home open a crack so Neo could let himself in. In the middle of the night, Ford said he heard a thud on the front porch and opened the door to see Neo covered in bite marks and losing blood. □

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 Local 565 9394 until 12/21 or 508 651 0016
 E-mail: rmwjmw@aol.com

212138



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Tania Grgurich, left, clinical associate professor of diagnostic imaging at Quinnipiac University, sits with Ariana DiPietrantonio, a senior radiology student, at Quinnipiac University's Center for Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Friday, Jan. 3, 2020, in North Haven, Conn.

Associated Press

Tests begin on bones that may be Revolutionary War soldiers

NORTH HAVEN, Conn. (AP)

— A university laboratory began tests Friday on skeletal remains found beneath an 18th century home in the hopes of identifying the three people believed to be soldiers killed during the Revolutionary War.

In December, while homeowners were renovating their house in Ridgefield, the remains were discovered in a grave under the foundation.

"These bones are so robust, they're dense, they're thick with muscle attachments (and) they're long," said Nick Bellantoni, emeritus state archaeologist of the Connecticut Museum of Natural History. "Who exactly they are, we are hoping the forensic work will show." While much remains unknown, researchers believe the remains belonged to men and possibly date to the Battle of Ridgefield, which occurred in April 1777. The way the men were buried in a haphazard grave also lends credibility to the idea that they were victims of the Battle

of Ridgefield.

"They're actually laying on top of each other overlapped," Bellantoni said.

If confirmed, Bellantoni said that would make them the first remains from a Revolutionary War soldier recovered in Connecticut.

Bellantoni said the medical examiner quickly suspected the bones were very old because older bones tend to have less organic matter and start to flake over time. Copper buttons found with the remains could indicate they belonged to militiamen.

While researchers suspect they might be soldiers, they don't know if they might be British or American.

The bones are being analyzed at Quinnipiac University's Center for Medicine, Nursing and Health Science in North Haven.

Jaime Ullinger, director of anthropology at the university, said they are starting to conduct X-ray analysis on the bones to help examine parts of the skeleton that have deteriorated over time. □



In this Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2019 photo, synthetic frogs from Syndaver Labs sits in a tray during a biology class at J.W. Mitchell High School in New Port Richey, Fla.

Associated Press

Fake frogs in school dissections eliminate gross-out-factor

**By TAMARA LUSH
NEW PORT RICHEY, Fla. (AP)**

— It's a rite of passage in schools across the U.S.: frog dissection.

Sometimes it happens in middle school, sometimes in high school. Feelings about the lesson are generally summed up in one word: gross. The frogs are slimy and greenish-grey, and they stink because they're pickled in formaldehyde.

One Florida high school recently tried to eliminate the gross-out factor by using fake, yet highly realistic, frogs. The school and the company that makes the synthetic frogs — not to mention animal rights groups like PETA — hope this will change how dissections are handled in classrooms across the country.

"The experience is all about understanding the relationship between organs, what they look like, what they feel like," said Chris Sakezles, the founder and CEO of Syndaver Labs, a Tampa company that also makes synthetic human cadavers and other life-like human and animal body parts. "We do that without the ethical concerns about having to kill an animal. Without exposing them to biohazards."

J.W. Mitchell High School in

New Port Richey was, according to PETA and school officials, the first in the world to try out the new technology. The school sits about a half hour north of Tampa, where Syndaver's labs are located, and the partnership started not with a frog, but a bunny.

School Principal Jessica Schultz had brought her pet rabbit to a veterinarian who happened to also work with Syndaver. They got to talking about frog dissection and the company's work with synthetic animals for veterinary students. Eventually, Schultz brought some of her students to Syndaver and they created lesson plans around the synthetic frogs. In late November, her students dissected the first of the fake frogs. They cut the skin and extracted the anatomically correct organs. "Kids went to town, to be quite honest," said Schultz. "We had kids that literally deboned the fake frogs."

Said Miah Ulibarri, a 17-year-old junior: "I was actually scared to cut it because I kept thinking about cutting into a real frog." Ulibarri started the year knowing she'd have to dissect something for her forensic science class, and she wasn't looking forward to it. Students could opt

out, Schultz said, and many often did during the dissection day.

"Just let the animal be," Ulibarri said. "Why kill them on purpose to dissect them?" Another student, 17-year-old senior Nail Koney-Laryea, said the frogs had a startlingly realistic look and feel to them. They were still slimy, and a squeeze of the leg yields a fragile bone inside. When kids cut inside the breastbone and stomach, they were able to see individual organs. Unlike real frogs, the delicate organ tissue didn't dissolve and explode.

"If you blindfolded me before I touched it, I wouldn't be able to tell the difference," said Koney-Laryea, who noted that several students had opted out of dissecting fetal pigs, frogs, and rats in previous classes due to moral disagreements with cutting open an animal that was once alive. Schultz said no students opted out of the dissection unit with the fake frog.

"We have to find ways to engage students with more interactive lessons and more relevant material," she said.

The barrier to widespread use of fake frogs could be the cost: Each frog is about \$150, and PETA helped fund part of this project. □

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As lights dance Sensorio artist sees nature, people interact

By JOHN ROGERS

Associated Press

PASO ROBLES, Calif. (AP) —

It's an art installation, sure. But the internationally acclaimed artist who created the interactive work "Field of Light at Sensorio" in California sees it as much more than that.

It is, says Bruce Munro, a conduit of sorts allowing its viewer to better commune with nature when taking in "Sensorio's" 58,000 shimmering, flower-like lights that have been painstakingly installed over 15 acres (6 hectares) of pristine pasture in the heart of central California wine country.

"I don't want to sound like some kind of ancient hippie because I'm not," the 60-year-old British artist says with a laugh as he discusses his latest — and largest — light exhibition.

When the sun sets behind the rolling hills on the edge of the small picturesque town of Paso Robles, and the lights come on, Munro says he senses a kind of tranquil peace settling over the hundreds of people who come each night to walk the hills and valleys bathed in his creation's gentle but colorful illumination.

"It almost is a lens to see the landscape that you're in," he said. "The landscape —



This Dec. 21, 2019 photo shows the entrance an art installation by artist Bruce Munro, made up of 58,000 shimmering flower-like lights in the rolling hills of Paso Robles, Calif., called the "Field of Light at Sensorio."

nature — really does help us find a balance in our lives

"We all are leading incredibly busy lives," he continues. "Busier than ever and with more screen time. And this is really an opportunity to get off screen, to get back into the real world. You know, to smell the cut grass, the fresh air. ... Or whatever. And be a part of it."

Munro has been putting up light-centric installations around the world for 15 years and is sometimes compared to the environmental artist Christo,

whose most famous work is likely "Running Fence," the 25 miles (40 kilometers) of colorful fabric he and his late wife and fellow artist, Jeanne-Claude, stretched from central California to the Pacific Ocean in the 1970s.

Munro's "Field of Light" works vary in appearance from sculptures to garden rooms to everyday objects that reflect light. His most famous, at least until now, is likely "Field of Light at Uluru," located in the red rock desert of Australia, a region considered sacred to the aboriginal people.

Fourteen years in the planning, it opened in 2016 for a brief run that has since been extended indefinitely.

It is similar to "Sensorio" but smaller, made up of 50,000 colorful, solar-powered twinkling orbs. The artist insists that had nothing to do with his trying to outdo himself by putting his largest work to date in California.

"Size is relevant to the landscape it inhabits," he said. "I don't put lights in to make bigger and bigger installations."

At "Sensorio," viewers see lights from numerous per-

spectives, including above and below, as they stroll the dirt paths bathed in softly lit colors. The result is a feeling of immersion in a world of quiet yet beautiful tranquility.

The exhibition, initially scheduled to close in January, has been extended through June, as its sponsors say more than 110,000 people from 41 countries have flocked to see it. Evening viewings often sell out ahead of time.

When it does close, Munro says, future visitors will hardly know it was there.

"Part of the reason we wanted to do solar is because there is no infrastructure that needs to be dug in," he said. "Everything is on the surface. When its time does go to disappear, and the landscape comes back, the existing landscape or something else that goes there, its footprint will be very minimal."

Meantime, the artist will move on to his next project. He's been busy sketching out something called "C-Scales," in which he hopes to create an image of the ocean "shedding its scales" into the air through the reflection of light upon thousands of old CDs and DVDs. He says the idea was inspired by gazing at Australia's Sydney Harbor. □

Associated Press

'On the Farm Again' Woman makes hay replica of Willie Nelson

Associated Press

HUDDLESTON, Va. (AP) —

Country singer Willie Nelson frequently sings about traveling and seeing things he may never see again. Chances are he had never before encountered a 15-foot-tall hay sculpture of himself — guitar and iconic pigtail braids included — like the one a Virginia woman recently created.

Huddleston native Beth Bays has been making giant hay bale sculptures for the last eight years. Her most memorable ones include characters from "The Wizard of Oz" and the Virginia Tech Hokie bird mascot.

But her latest work, "Will-Hay Nelson," really struck a chord in the community upon its debut in November, Bays told news outlets. "This one seems to be everyone's favorite by far," Bays said. "My cousin joked that I might have to quit now because I'll never be able to top this."

Bays owns Bucksrape Farms and started making the sculptures as part of a hay bale decorating contest. The contest ended a few years ago but Bays continues to create new sculptures each year for the community.

Bays said Will-Hay Nelson was easier to assemble than some of her past

sculptures but was more difficult in terms of details, The News & Advance reported. She said she used chicken wire to make the arms and the guitar is made of Styrofoam.

"I also had to make a nose out of chicken wire because Willie has a very prominent nose and I wanted to get that right," Bays said.

Bays said every year the community gets together and sings songs related to the sculptures. This year local musician Dave Owens switched up the lyrics to one of Nelson's songs.

"I changed 'On the Road Again' to 'On the Farm Again,'" Owens said laugh-



In this Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2019 photo, a hay bale sculpture called Will-Hay Nelson stands in a field on Tolers Ferry Road in Huddleston, Va.

Associated Press

ing. "It's always a good time."

Nelson saw the viral video of the performance and

shared it on his Facebook page. Seems like the hay sculpture may always be on his mind. □

Study finds 2019 was a 'banner year' for female filmmakers

By **JAKE COYLE**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Lulu Wang, Lorene Scafaria, Melina Matsoukas and Greta Gerwig led Hollywood to a record year for women in the director's chair. In 2019, women directed more of the most popular movies than any year before. Women directed 12 of 2019's top 100-grossing films in 2019, according to a study released Thursday

by USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative. That percentage of female filmmakers, 10.6%, is greater than researchers have recorded before, suggesting that some measure of change is finally coming to a film industry where inequality behind the camera has remained stubbornly persistent. It's the most meaningful increase in several decades for female directors. De-



This image released by Sony Pictures shows, writer-director Greta Gerwig, left, and actress Meryl Streep on the set of "Little Women."

active officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios. Other notable films included Kasi Lemmons' "Harriet," Tina Gordon's "Little" and Jill Culton's "Abominable." USC researchers singled out Universal Pictures, which put forward a slate of films with 26% directed by women. Universal is the only major studio with a female studio chief, Donna Langley.

Netflix also fared well. While the streaming company's films largely bypass theaters — leaving them outside the study's parameters — 20% of Netflix's 2019 movies were directed by women.

Paramount Pictures, however, hasn't released a movie directed by a woman in the last five years.

Four women of color directed one of the top 100 movies in 2019, though the overall statistics for underrepresented directors dipped. Underrepresented filmmakers were behind 16.8% of films in 2019, a decline from last year's 21.4%, a record.

"While 2019 is a banner year for women, we will not be able to say there is true change until all women have access and opportunity to work at this level," said Smith. □

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spite mounting outcry, the rate of female directors helping Hollywood's top productions has long been largely stagnant. The previous high in USC's annual study was 8%, in 2008. In 2018, only 4.5% of the year's top films were directed by women.

"This is the first time we have seen a shift in hiring practices for female film directors in 13 years," said Stacy L. Smith, one of the study's authors. "One notable reason for this jump in 2019 was that Universal Pictures had five films with women directors at the helm in the top 100 movies. Yet there is still much more progress needed to reach parity for women behind the camera."

Associated Press

The high-profile success of several films had already made 2019 a historic one for women. Those include Wang's "The Farewell," one of the year's most popular indie releases, Scafaria's acclaimed "Hustlers" (\$105 million domestically), Matsoukas' "Queen & Slim" (\$40.7 million) and Gerwig's "Little Women," which last week opened strongly with \$29 million in its first five days of release.

"Frozen II," with \$1.2 billion in worldwide ticket sales, is close to setting a new box-office record for a movie directed by a woman. Jennifer Lee, who co-directed the film, set the record with the first "Frozen" film. In 2018, Lee became the chief cre-

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Justin Bieber to launch docu-series on YouTube in January

By The Associated Press

Justin Bieber is launching a docu-series about creating his new album on YouTube, the platform where the singer originally got his start in music over a decade ago.

YouTube announced Tuesday that "Justin Bieber: Seasons" will debut Jan. 27. The 10-episode series will follow the pop star while he records his first new album since 2015. Before releasing his debut song in 2009, Bieber gained popularity from posting his performances of cover songs on YouTube.

"When I was getting start-

ed, YouTube provided me a platform and a community where I could share music, experiences and moments with my fans," Bieber said in a statement. "It feels great to partner with YouTube for this original documentary series. I want my fans to be part of this journey." Bieber, 25, will release a new song, "Yummy," on Friday. His most recent album was "Purpose," which features the hits "Sorry," "Love Yourself," "What Do You Mean?" and "Where Are U Now," a collaboration with Diplo and Skrillex which won Bieber his first-ever Grammy Award. □



This Nov. 22, 2015 file photo shows Justin Bieber at the American Music Awards in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

T.S. Eliot letters to muse to be unveiled after 60 years

By CHRISTINA PACIOLLA

Associated Press

After more than 60 years spent sealed up in a library storage facility, about 1,000 letters written by poet T.S. Eliot to confidante Emily Hale will be unveiled this week, and scholars hope they will reveal the extent of a relationship that's been speculated about for decades.

Many consider Hale to not only be his close friend, but also his muse, and they hope their correspondence will offer insight into the more intimate details about Eliot's life and work. Students, researchers and scholars can read the letters at Princeton University Library starting Thursday.

"I think it's perhaps the literary event of the decade," says Anthony Cuda, an Eliot scholar and director of the T.S. Eliot International Summer School. "I don't know of anything more awaited or significant. It's momentous to have these letters coming out."

Lifelong friends, Hale and Eliot exchanged letters for about 25 years beginning in 1930. The two met in 1912 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but did not rekindle their friendship until 1927. Eliot was already living in England and Hale taught drama at U.S. universities, including Scripps College in California.

In 1956, Hale donated the



In this Oct. 14, 2019, photo, letters between poet T.S. Eliot and longtime confidante Emily Hale are displayed in Princeton, N.J.

letters under an agreement they wouldn't be opened until 50 years after either her or Eliot's death, whichever came second. Eliot died in 1965. Hale died four years later.

Biographers say Eliot ordered Hale's letters to him to be burned.

Their relationship "must have been incredibly important and their corre-

spondence must have been remarkably intimate for him to be so concerned about the publication," Cuda says.

T.S. Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1888 and gained notoriety as a poet early in life. He was only 26 when "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" became his first professionally published poem.

Eliot's 1939 book of whimsical poetry, "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats," was adapted into "Cats," the award-winning musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber. The play opened in London first in 1981 and then on Broadway the next year. It was then turned into a feature film starring an ensemble cast that includes Judi Dench and James Corden

just released in December. His best known works include "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men" and "Four Quartets."

The first poem in the "Quartets" series, called "Burnt Norton," piques the interest of enthusiasts of the poet, says Eliot scholar Frances Dickey, because of lines that suggest missed opportunities and what might have been with his muse. The poem is named after a home in England that Eliot visited with Hale in 1934.

"His relationship with her seems to be deep and meaningful and it's a door he chose not to open," she said. Dickey, who served as one of the editors on "The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot", said the poet was deeply ashamed of his marriage to his first wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood, whom he was with for more than 15 years. Dickey said the letters could reveal just how close he and Hale were and if the two ever considered marriage.

"Was this an epistolary romance they would carry across the Atlantic?" Dickey said. "What role did she play in his emotional life?" Eliot's letters to Hale began after that first marriage ended. Whatever else she was, Hale was a link to the life Eliot had left behind in the United States as a young man, Dickey said. □

Associated Press

Josh Duhamel gets new contract to promote North Dakota

JAMES MacPHERSON

Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota will again enlist the help of Hollywood actor Josh Duhamel to help promote tourism in his home state.

North Dakota's tourism department confirmed Tuesday to The Associated Press that the star of several "Transformers" movies will be paid \$175,000 to be the face of the state's tourism campaign for the next two years. The state has had a contract with Duhamel since 2013 to help lure visitors to North Dakota.

The contract extension that expires on Dec. 31, 2021,

brings to more than \$1 million Duhamel has received from the state.

Duhamel is from Minot, a city in the northern part of the state that's about an hour's drive from the United States border with Canada. The advertising campaign featuring Duhamel is a continuation of the North Dakota Legendary brand that was established in 2002 to help create more awareness of the state.

Although North Dakota is one of the least-visited states in the U.S., tourism is the state's third-largest industry, behind energy and agriculture. The biggest draw is Theodore Roosevelt



In this March 13, 2018 file photo, Josh Duhamel arrives at a special screening of "Love, Simon" in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

National Park in western North Dakota's badlands. State Tourism Division Di-

rector Sara Otte Coleman is scheduled to unveil the new two-year advertis-

ing campaign next week, said Heather LeMoine, the agency's marketing manager.

The previous \$2.9 million campaign featured Duhamel doing everything from fishing and biking to attending college football and hockey games. Some also include his 6-year-old son Axl, whose mother is Black Eyed Peas singer Fergie. The campaign included TV and print ads, as well as travel and hunting guides.

Duhamel "has spotlighted the state that not many people know about," LeMoine said. "It has definitely paid off." □

Slavery museum in Liverpool aims to confront painful legacy

By **RUSSELL CONTRERAS**

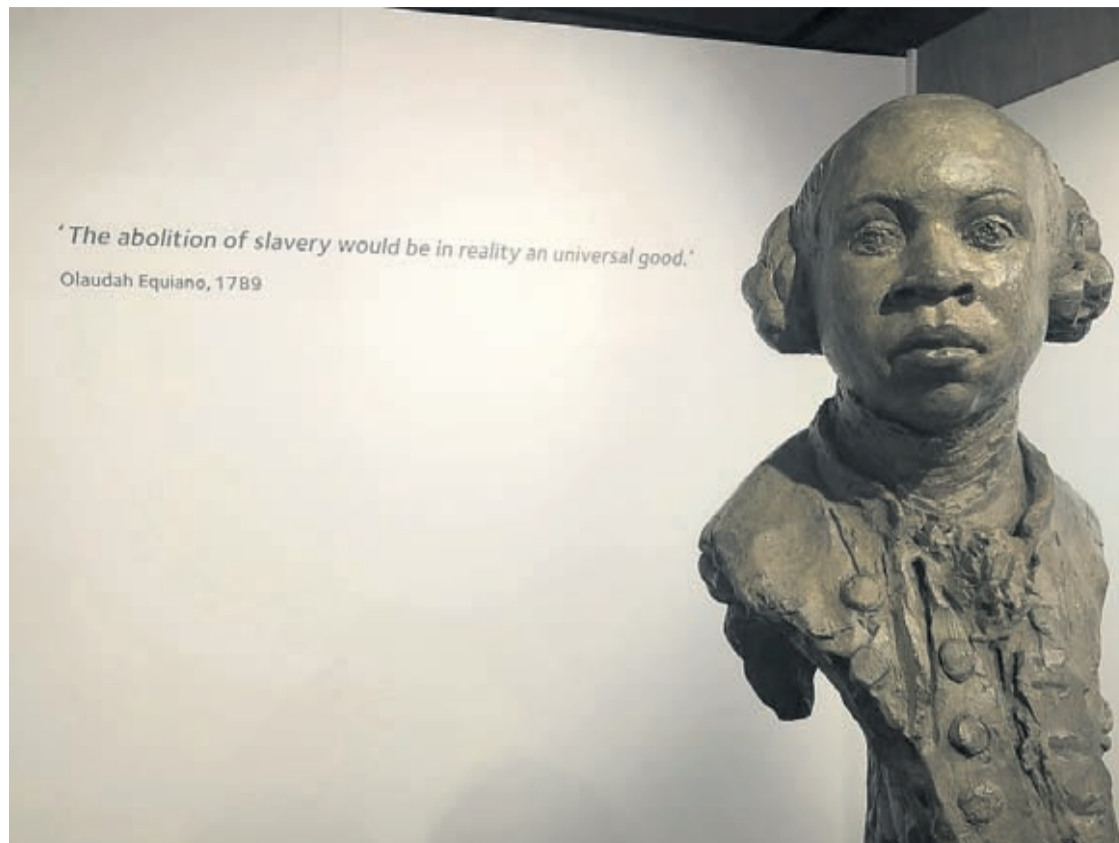
Associated Press

LIVERPOOL, England (AP) —

Scarlet shackles sit peacefully on display in front of a sad, gray backdrop. The now rusted leg irons once locked human ankles during 18th century voyages from Africa to some European port, then to the Americas.

Who the shackles held remain a mystery. But as a citizen of the United States, I've likely broken bread with a descendant of the woman forced to wear this instrument. Maybe my uncle fought alongside her kin in a war. Or it's possible one of her distant relatives is now be my relative.

These are the thoughts I entertain recently while walking through the reflective International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England. Founded in 2007 on the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade, the museum sits just a short walk from the dry docks where slave trading ships were repaired and fitted out in the 1700s. (And it's close by the The Beatles Story, the world's largest permanent exhibition purely devoted to the hometown band.) Once a major slaving port, Liverpool grew thanks to merchants' financial ties to the enslavement of people to the Americas. Today, the building tells the story of the enslavement of people from Africa and how this British city benefited from human bondage. The Liverpool location reclaims a space once connected to worldwide hu-

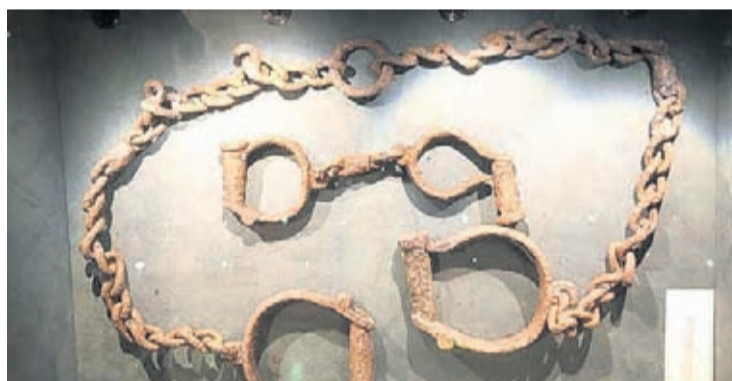


In this Nov. 24, 2019 photo, a sculpture of former slave and later abolitionist writer Olaudah Equiano is displayed at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England.

Associated Press

man suffering and is similar to O Mercado de Escravos — the slavery museum in Lagos, Portugal, where the European slave trade began. But Liverpool's museum is much larger, more interactive, and more ambitious without being exploitative.

Inside, visitors immediately are taken on a meditative experience focusing on Africa before European contact. You are greeted by quotes of American abolitionists and civil rights leaders etched into stone walls before you see traditional masks from present-day Sierra Leone and Mali. There are vibrant textiles from Ghana, intricate headdresses from Camer-



In this Nov. 24, 2019 photo, a set of shackles used to hold enslaved Africans in forts and castles along the coast from Tamale, Ghana, are displayed at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England.

Associated Press

oon and samples of Igbo wall painting from Nigeria. You can listen to samples of drum signals from the Republic of Congo or a Mbuti hunting song. The messages are clear: before enslavement, Africa was a diverse and complex continent with long artistic and religious traditions.

Next, visitors are whisked toward a room tackling enslavement and the brutal Middle Passage. Racial ideologies and Europe's unfamiliarity with the cultures of Africa sparked the slave trade which grew once European powers expanded to the Americas, the museum tells us. In this room, details of the voyage of the ship Essex are reconstructed. That's a slave ship that left Liverpool on June 13, 1783, just nine years after

the American Declaration of Independence. During the Middle Passage portion, visitors encounter shackles and chains used in forts and castles along the African coast to hold humans before their horrific journey. A small replica of a slave boat illustrates how captives were tossed into small compartments. Next to the ship are 18th-century whips and branding irons. Yes, these were used. Then, there was resistance, liberation, and the long fight for civil rights. Surprising, I walked into an area dedicated to the African American heroes from Harriet Tubman to the Rev. Martin Luther King. Jr. and Malcolm X. U.S. news footage from the 1950s and 1960s illustrates how the descendants of those who

crossed the Middle Passage had to fight for human rights and against violence amid white supremacy — the ideology that launched racialized slavery in the first place. There's also photos of the civil rights struggles in the United Kingdom from London's "Keep Britain White Rally" in 1960 to the Toxteth Riot of 1981 in Liverpool over allegations of police harassment.

The museum ends with a space for changing exhibits related to the themes around modern-day slavery. During my visit in November, I encountered an exhibition called "Am I not a woman and a sister" — a moving image installation by England-based artist Elizabeth Kwant. She co-created the project with female survivors of modern-day slavery in partnership with Liverpool charity City Hearts. The project links current human trafficking to the story out of the Middle Passage.

In the U.S., journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones has sparked conversations about the legacy of slavery in that nation's history with her interactive 1619 Project in The New York Times. It examines the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved people from West Africa on the present-day America's eastern shore. The project challenges readers to consider how their own lives have been shaped by the legacy of slavery and it is helping inspire activists in places like Albuquerque, New Mexico, to push for their own museum of black history. Walking by an installation of former slave and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano, I heard two young black women discussing the 1619 Project and how they didn't understand the criticism it faced for trying to reshape a narrative in the U.S. As we left the Equiano sculpture, we stopped at a display of a 1920-era Ku Klux Klan robe and hood from Port Jervis, New York. But I could feel we were relieved the glass case surrounding it protected us. We were safe for now. But were we? □



In this Nov. 24, 2019 photo, latex figures made in the 1940s depicting daily life in Jamaica in the sugar cane fields displayed at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England.

Associated Press